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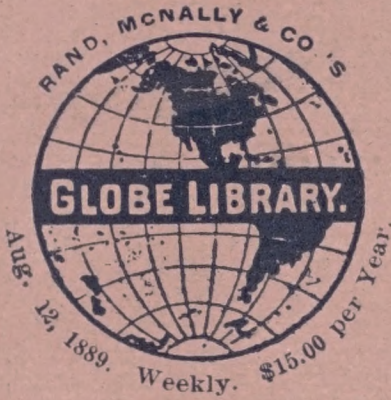
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THE

Golgotha of the Heart.

BY

HANS WACHENHUSEN.

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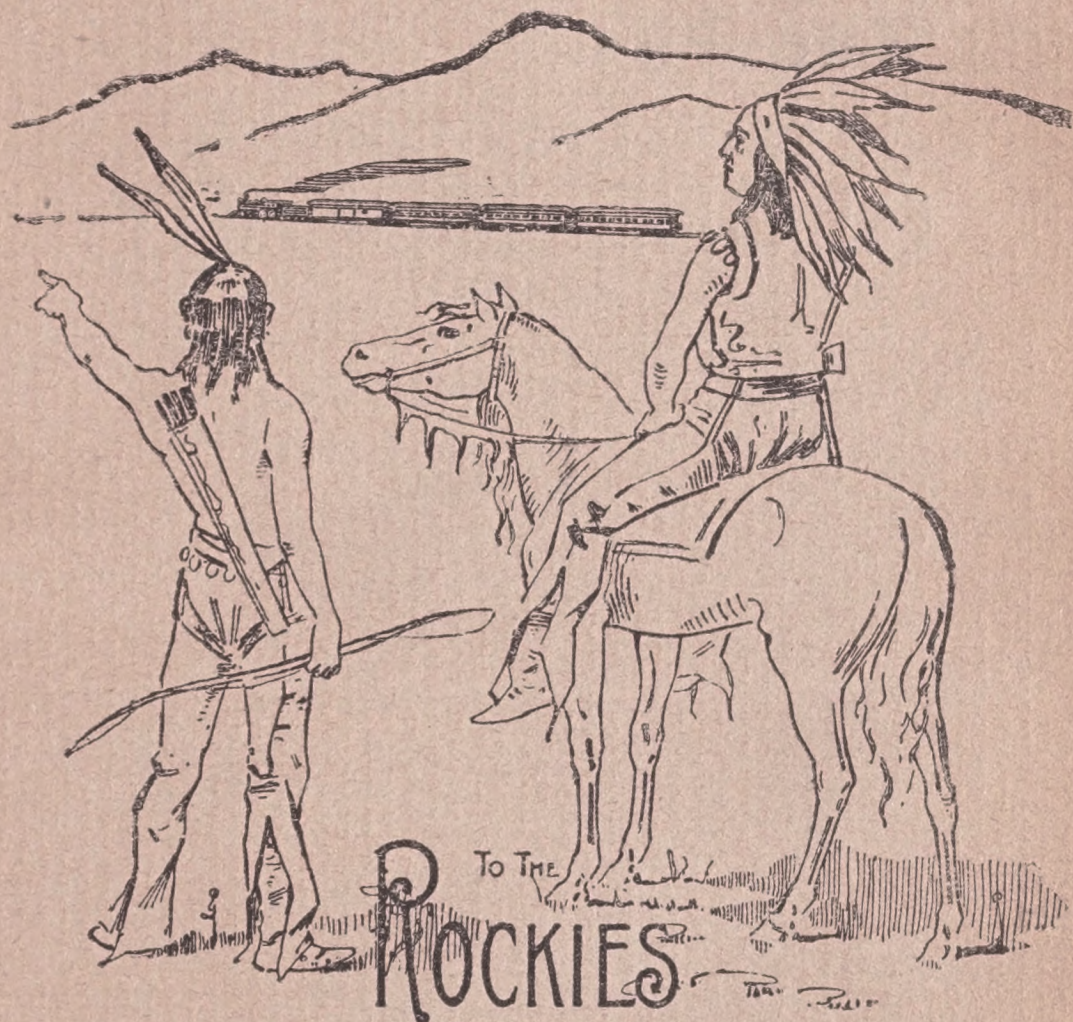
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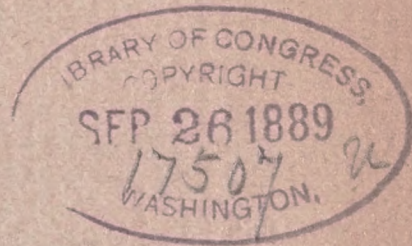
THE
GOLGOTHA OF THE HEART

(DES HERZENS GOLGOTHA.)

BY
HANS WACHENHUSEN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY

40
HETTIE E. MILLER.



CHICAGO AND NEW YORK:
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THE GOLGOTHA OF THE HEART.

CHAPTER I.

There are other deaths than that which we die, and one of those I have lived for months. Death is often a happy release, but life without any aim, without any value, without any communication with the outer world, that nervous, painful existence, is a torment.

Three months have I been buried. My grave is beautiful, it is true; a paradise. But is there a greater punishment for a captive than the constant sight of the beauty of a world which has been taken from him? Well he knows in this paradise which lies before him, he has sinned, failed, and offended! Others pollute it daily by their desires, their passions, and their vices. Whilst the church-bell in my paradise calls to devotion, whilst hundreds bow humbly before their Maker and whisper fervent prayers, whilst the priest pronounces the benediction, the curse in its old, accustomed activity, the curse of Cain, which clings to us all, is working.

Why am I buried alive? I seem to myself often a suicide, a criminal, who attempted my life, and ask myself why I did it? It was not from weariness, not from despondency, but only in consequence of the reflection that it is permitted a combatant to withdraw from the fray as soon as his strength gives out.

Perhaps I may be called cowardly because I did not make another effort. It may be wrong to throw down one's weapon, and not to try a last resort, to give up all

hope at the age of twenty. It is even possible that the faint-heartedness of my childhood's playmate, whose ideas influenced mine, still clings to me to-day. Eugenie, as a child, was accustomed to defend herself as long as it did not cost her any great effort; then she would sigh "*C'est plus fort que moi!*" and lay her hands in her lap. All about me is so quiet, so death-like. In the evening only, when the moon floods the Eden at my feet in its silvery light, when the nightingales sing in the park trees, when the mist in the valley covers everything with a veil through which the moonbeams glimmer, only in the evening, it seems to me as if all who have been buried in the convent appear like the ghosts in "Robert," and when I flee from them, when I stand at my window and look down upon them as they hover about the grounds, I feel as if they must vanish into their graves on the stroke of the bell.

And are they all not more or less buried as I am? Did not a moral death lead the majority of them here, a death, the secret of which they would all gladly have hidden, but which the superior found out in its smallest details?

There are eighteen of us here, all silent, lifeless, bloodless; I would say, automaton, that move by mechanism.

I often think that some are still capable of sympathy. But it is only a semblance, only a former habit, which they have brought to the grave with them, for inwardly they are without feeling.

Even bad qualities are dead in them; in the grave there is no more envy, no desire, no passion, for the motives are wanting which arouse them.

Poor sisters! If I could take an interest in any one of you, it would be in Stephanie, because she is so solitary and strange.

She, who to my astonishment put in an appearance here several weeks ago, is the only one who really brought a romance with her. All the rest are commonplace souls who are made miserable by the same weighty reasons which cause a child to cry when his toy is taken from him.

Perhaps I seem just the same to Stephanie. It is impossible for either of us to approach the other, although we might wish to do so. The superior treats her just as she does me—that is, with a certain respectful reserve, while she regards the others as her special wards.

It is strange that fate should have thrown us together here! Stephanie did not suspect that I had watched her in the night when she had stolen out into the garden, and to that night do I owe the key to her secret.

Neither of us had the least suspicion of the interest which linked us together—no, that is a terrible thought—two corpses that must be antagonistic in the grave, and hate one another in this life.

Since that night there has been no rest for me! From that moment it is no death that I live; it is a four-thousandfold torment into which I have innocently plunged. And what lies beyond my apparent death? Salvation? The gates of hell?

I have kept a diary during the three months of my retirement. I have written down everything, for I look upon it as my memoir. I have no idea of what has happened since the night when I watched Stephanie. All is dark; my mind wanders helplessly from one thought to another. There is no more peace for me.

But I will force myself to read through my diary, live through it again, and then decide if I acted for the best, if I could have done otherwise. Often, yes, always, it seems to us a day, even an hour, later, as if we might

have done differently. We ask, shrinking from ourselves, Why did I not do thus or thus? We discover an expedient, which in the infatuation, in the excitement of the moment, we did not think of, or which seemed to us objectionable. And yet, I know that I could not have done otherwise; that I was only wrong in one thing—in the choice of a refuge, where I found just the person whom I wished to avoid.

I dread stepping over the threshold of my hermitage. I might meet her. Even the atmosphere seems poisonous, because I breathe it with her. I start out of my sleep, and see her, hear her voice. I imagine I hear light footsteps, as if she were stealing to my bedside, bending over me, whispering in my ear.

I know I have grown morbid since that night; if I could only succeed in quieting my nerves!

I need air! It is close in my bedroom; even the night air is sultry. Behind the hills the sun is sinking and its rosy light is reflected on their summits. The tinkling of the sheep-bell sounds to my ear like the knell of the doomed criminal; the whistling of the wind in the trees below, the twittering in the bushes that formerly had such a soothing effect upon me, now whisper so suspiciously, so incomprehensibly, so cunningly, I might say—and down there, where the meadows meet the brook, where the path planted with honeysuckle winds down to the pond, a tall, darkly-clad figure looms in sight. She stoops; she picks one of the rare blossoms which the superior tends so carefully; she tears it to pieces, and throws it contemptuously from her. She looks back cautiously, as if she fears being watched; now she steps amongst the underwood; she takes the road to the village. I feel easier, now that I do not see her. To me she is like an evil demon, yet she is

beautiful with her pale, cold face, and the unnatural fire in her eyes. I shudder at the thought of being under one roof, in one grave, with her. And yet, she has not taken leave of the world; it is not because she is weary of life that she is here; that nocturnal scene convinced me of that! She lives, she hopes, she struggles yet; she has only withdrawn here to collect new strength, and her victory may be my ruin!

Inconsistent, wayward organ, the heart! I sought and found oblivion, rest, and the sight of her sufficed to awaken in me all that should have died out!

I wished to leave the world with all its seemingly beautiful and lofty aspirations after the divine, for that highest and holiest gift of Providence, my heart, which only of all our being can be given us by God, which is woman's one divine inheritance, had become a Calvary—a Golgotha.

I must compose myself and open my diary, the recording of which made my solitude bearable. I will read of Eugenie, who was once so bright and happy; of poor Marie, who never was; who, according to her aunt's opinion, must be unhappy like all Marys, because they carry with them through life the Biblical tradition of the Virgin.

I will read my own experiences and those of my friends up to the time when I fled here from fate; here, where I thought there was no more fate, and whence it followed me, by sending after me one of its demons, with whose appearance the drama of my life will probably re-commence.

That night's apparition was no delusion; Stephanie lives. I will read and then make a decision which may only bring me fresh suffering.

CHAPTER II.

We do not appreciate what a happy, golden age it is when we smile upon the world in our earliest youth! The mother follows with delight her child's gambols; she watches its first movements, she notes its development, she forms plans for the future, all so rosy, so blissful; she thinks she sees God's protecting arm in the hundred small dangers which surround the unsuspecting little one; she sees herself young again in her darling, forgets gladly her own trials, proud in the consciousness of being able to guard him, until unnoticed by herself worldliness grows and expands in the child, who begins his struggle with a world, the issue of which is so uncertain. For it is worldliness in us which brings to us fortune or misfortune, which obtains for us a good or bad position in that chaos which composes the outer world.

Probably scarcely one of my sisters entered life with so much anticipation of happiness as I; perhaps that was why I failed to obtain it. My good, kind mother was one of the most delicate and thoughtful of women, whose one care was to foster in her children's minds all those tender emotions, which, according to her views, were the ornament of every woman.

Herself very beautiful, educated with the greatest care, her intelligence was far above the average—yet was she withal so modest that she seemed unaware of the charms both of her mind and person, and soon became one of the queens of society. It was my mother's desire to train me as she had been trained, and I remember

well how the large circle of our acquaintance recognized in me the youthful image of my mother.

My mother was happy because she knew how to be so, because she possessed a rich treasure in her heart and mind, which raised her above the trivialities of life.

At least my father's equal intellectually, she subordinated him, whose nature was proud, self-willed, often rude and indomitable, and impressed him by her angelic gentleness even in cases when her womanly pride was wounded.

My father had held one of the highest positions in the German state. His excessive pride, his vanity, had forced him to resign this position and to retire prematurely into private life.

Probably he felt convinced that the sovereign, who prized him so highly, would offer an apology, and as that did not come to pass, he was exasperated still more.

He left the capital, taking my mother with him, after disposing of his furniture, his pictures, and his stables with some ostentation, took a trip to France and Italy, and in the spring moved into one of the finest, most romantically situated castles in his possession. Here he first began his studies. He wrote a book on state government, which, when completed, he locked in his desk, in order to have it handed over to his sovereign or his successor at his death. After this he gave himself up entirely to his "noble passions," which, from that time forth were to occupy all his attention.

He lived in grand style. Once or twice a week the most brilliant gatherings in the whole neighborhood met with us. Hunting, fire-works, tournaments on a small scale, and other fêtes were planned. My father was always conspicuous as the most prominent cavalier, and my mother was always the center of respect and admiration.

From that time dates the life-sized portrait that was hung up in the knight's hall of our castle. I was then about six years old; but to-day I can see myself standing with delight before that portrait, gazing at its beauty, although the painter, one of the first artists from a neighboring academy, had not succeeded in portraying all the fascination of that lovely face.

Next me stood Eugenie, my playmate, who had been recently received into our family to assist me with French. Eugenie, after staring at the painting some time silently, seized me involuntarily by the arm and whispered in French: "Paula, you will be as pretty as that some day!" We were then both children!

My small vanity never forgot that. I often afterward stopped before the mirror in the salon, when no one was watching me, in order to ascertain if there really was such a great resemblance to my lovely mother. Eugenie, scarcely four years older than I, had an idolatrous reverence for the latter.

There was in that child a worship for personal beauty which entirely coincided with her shallow, flighty character. At the same time she entertained an equally great fear of my father. I often saw her tremble involuntarily when she heard the clinking of his spurs. She would gaze at his tall form, and if he addressed a few kind words to her, she would turn as pale as death.

The cause of this was probably her low extraction, which easily awoke in her admiration, surprise, or fear. She was the child of poor parents, was brought to an institute in Paris by relatives, and from there was sent to us. She was modest, retiring, and grateful for any attention or kindness shown her.

As I heard later, my father had once loved my mother with a passion bordering on madness, which she returned

with true affection, but within the limits of reason, in which way she controlled all of her feelings and connection with the world.

But a few years after their marriage my father's passion had cooled. While all respected and honored his wife, with the classical beauty, with the form of a Juno, with her grace and her intellect, he treated her with patrician regard, with a kindness in which a certain reserve was visible.

The attentions which she received my father seemed to regard as her due. He smiled to himself when he saw her surrounded by cavaliers, paid his attentions to other ladies, which attentions sat well upon him, and knew that his wife ruled all, without placing more value on the devotion of one than the other.

Nevertheless, I often noticed that for days a certain coolness would exist between my parents. I readily ascribed it to a passing ill-temper on the part of my father, which sometimes possessed him, when he reproached himself, or others did so, because he had withdrawn so early from a brilliant career, such as his had been.

His irritation was augmented when he thought that some distinguished person staying in our neighborhood, and knowing that our castle was the center of that small world and one of the most charming points in the surrounding country, did not pay him, His Highness Count von M., the expected consideration or attention.

Pride and unbounded self-conceit were my father's most prominent traits of character. This pride he exhibited to others at every opportunity, but strange to say, he seldom paraded it before his wife.

An evidence of the recklessness and impetuosity of his character he gave two years after my birth, for I was born three years after my parents' marriage.

One of his friends, Baron Reuth, at a supper following the races, thoughtlessly and probably somewhat heated by champagne, when the conversation turned upon Count M. and his devotion to his wife, had laughed, and, pooh-poohing the idea, said:

"Bah! Count M. loves his horses as passionately as his handsome wife!"

Several days after, when this came to my father's ears, he rode into town alone, not followed by his groom, as usual.

That evening he entered the club, rushed upon Baron Reuth in one of the salons, and in the presence of his friends struck him across the face with his whip.

He then approached the Baron's brother, who was seated at the whist table, told him that he despised him for being the brother of a villain to whom he had just given his deserts, and the next day in a duel sent a bullet through the unfortunate man's heart.

The Baron's brother could not take his revenge. Half mad with rage at the insult, he had scarcely returned home from the club when he was seized with an apoplectic fit and died immediately.

My father was imprisoned four months.

When he was released, the aristocracy met him with increased interest, and all vied with one another in assuring my mother, who during his imprisonment had been in the vicinity, of their disgust at the insult offered to both him and her.

My father forgot the blood he had shed in performing his duties as a cavalier.

Later I learned that the change in his manner toward my mother dated from that time.

Perhaps the consciousness of having for her sake killed a friend who had not injured him, troubled him

more than he allowed others to know of, for the brother of that man had been an intimate friend of his; but the conviction that he would be obliged to break off the friendship had driven him to that insult.

I have never been able to comprehend that fixed, inexorable code of honor which society dictates to man; which forces him to break all other laws, even the holiest; which, by a single thoughtless word may cause bloodshed, and bring inexpressible misery to others.

My father's deed, approved of by the world for reasons to me inexplicable, I could never account for, unless his passionate disposition was the cause of it.

When I began to take an interest in the world all traces of that bloody deed had entirely disappeared; at least, I can not remember its being mentioned once.

Our castle was, as I have said, the rendezvous of the "Upper Ten," amongst which our family stood foremost, my parents' wealth having been doubled by the early death of my mother's brother, who died at the Hyères Islands, where he, a consumptive, had gone several years before. My father used the increase in his fortune to purchase a large, adjoining estate, upon which to put up a palatial mansion, which was to be my brother's, but which was never finished.

Between the latter and me there had been lacking from our youth all sisterly and brotherly affection.

Hermann, several years my senior, was very unmanageable, so much so that his tutor could not govern him; he was very young when he began to tease, to annoy others, to vent his petty spitefulness on those whom he could offend without fear of punishment, and indeed he never was punished, for no one had the courage to complain of him to our father.

Eugenie trembled when she heard him near her. I was always flying from him, and if I ventured to complain of him to my mother, it availed us nothing.

My father considered it his privilege to train the boy himself. My mother seldom carried her point when she required Hermann's correction, and the result was that the latter soon lost his respect for her, because he saw that his father sided with him. The consequences were that Hermann directed his malice against his mother whenever he could, that he looked upon her as an enemy, and as he did not dare to practice his wantonness upon his mother herself, he made butts of Eugenie and me.

It is almost impossible to conceive how much harm a destructive, malicious boy can do even when quite young, if he has no cause to fear correction.

All the servants, the inhabitants of the village even, feared the rude boy, whose whole mind was filled with the thought of doing some mischief, while his father looked down smilingly from the height of his imperious self-consciousness upon this petty worthlessness. He magnanimously tried to console the injured parties, but it never occurred to him to punish his boy.

He loved, he often said with satisfaction, those wild, unruly natures; saw in them the original qualities for forming a character, and only dreaded that his son might develop into one of those commonplace, weak creatures, who never progress an inch beyond their everyday existence, and creep on servilely in accordance with the laws of society and the state.

He, who had worked under the laws of the state, now scoffed at them; this must have surely been one of the results of that displeasure which caused him to withdraw from public life.

The management of his large estates often occasioned him much trouble and vexation, and these troubles increased in proportion to the growth of his wealth. But in all this he found that which compensated him for the past.

The secret charm in the possession of property was so manifest, that later I could easily see through it. All the cares caused by these possessions, the small receipts, the battles with the elements, bad harvests, and other things, are all forgotten in the autocratic consciousness of being ruler over so and so many tracts of land, and so and so many souls, and this masterful feeling leads one so easily to infringe on those above and below, to the right and to the left of the boundaries which are worked by one's own plow.

It was very evident that my father hoped to make of his son a man who, placed by him as lord over a number of people, and strong in aristocratic insolence, should defy the crown, which had wounded him, or rather his unbounded pride. Therefore, he educated his son according to feudal principles. His better judgment as a clever statesman did not lead him to this choice; it was his pique. If he had been an unrewarded, unappreciated servant of the crown, his son by observing a defiant independence should revenge him.

This thought had possessed him since that day when the monarch, with whom he had formerly been closeted daily in his cabinet, had visited in our vicinity, and, without taking the slightest notice of him, had accepted a neighbor's invitation to a chase, which would necessarily touch upon our boundaries.

I remember yet, how upon that day early in the morning, as Eugenie and I were playing in the park, my father, clad in his finest hunting-suit, rode out, accom-

panied by some intimate friends, his piquers, and a dozen servants ; how the horns sounded merrier and louder than usual, and how the voices of the guests and the clinking of glasses penetrated to our room far into the night.

From that time forth—I understood all later—we lived higher than ever—I ascribed all these festivities, that is the numerous tournaments and tilts, the jousts of fishermen on our large lake, the magnificent hunting-parties, to the inheritance ; but the true motive which suggested to my father this princely household was that of making an impression upon the court with his grandeur.

The king should hear of it, the papers should speak of it, and with the same aim, he prepared a programme for a visit to the residence late in the summer, when the Diet would be in session ; he scrupulously carried out his intentions, we children remaining at home in charge of our masters.

Far from me is the thought of speaking with want of respect about my father. He wished to be judged by his actions ; he was proud of being just so and not otherwise, and only one thing did he seek to hide, namely, the sense of having been insulted or slighted, which was nevertheless the mainspring of many of his deeds.

His was an imperious, arrogant nature, and the kindness which he evinced to us children was shown in moments when he was contented with himself and his surroundings ; and even then, Hermann was the object of this favor, while he seemed to assign me to my mother.

His affection for the boy went so far that he connived at all his mad tricks even if they bore the stamp of villainy.

Only occasionally he would knit his brows, but would say nothing.

Had Hermann put a poor villager's eye out with a catapult, his father would have provided for the unfortunate girl's future. When he came upon poor Eugenie from behind by the fountain in the garden, and threw her into the basin, so that the poor creature was drenched, my father only called it a "a roguish prank."

When, one day, he bound my favorite doll to the tail of a dragon, which, with the help of a servant, he had mounted, my father was delighted with his idea; and if he set one of our dogs upon a couple of urchins, who ran home with torn clothes, my father sent them money.

In spite of his imperious ways, my father was beloved by his inferiors. In his person and actions he was grand seigneur, and everyone thought he could not be otherwise; he must be so. All that he did was stylish and knightly, and involuntarily the masses were devoted to him, while the better classes, even, often against their wills, perceived the superiority, I might say the majesty, of his appearance.

It did not matter to him, the Count von M., that the times of chivalry were over. What in others might have been condemned as "Don Quixotic," suited him, and the aristocrats of the province saw in him their dauntless standard-bearer, who possessed the spirit, the courage, and the power to brave the leveling influences of the time.

My mother, a member of one of the oldest and noblest families of a neighboring province, joined with her fine, womanly tact, silently, and probably not unwillingly, those who regarded her husband as their representative; and if it was not very enjoyable, still she found an opportunity in all this social disturbance to control the same by her beauty and intellect.

It is so easy for a beautiful woman to gain power if she possesses the tact to banish everything from her

circle which might interfere with her. Kind and gentle by nature, my mother understood how to make up for my father's rudeness, if he grew passionate and violent. If my father was not thoughtful of poverty, and did not sympathize with misery, perhaps it was because he left that domain to his wife. It was too trifling a matter for him to trouble about. He had only to do with the dispensation of money on a large scale, and laughed when he saw how the needy ones quarreled amongst themselves for the crumbs which fell from his table.

My education and its superintendence were of course intrusted to my governess and my mother, whilst he devoted himself entirely to that of my brother, and zealously saw to it that athletics and sport in all their branches were early enjoyed by the boy.

And to this mother do I owe everything, including my misery, though she trained me as she had been, and carefully guarded me from corrupt and shallow associations.

CHAPTER III.

I had just completed my seventeenth year, when my father's life was terminated by a fall on the hunting-field. He was mourned by society, which had seen in him a sort of center; he was probably also criticised, as those usually are at their deaths, who, during their lifetime, cared for the enjoyments of others; when society was left to ennui and found itself without amusement, it perceived his faults, which in the midst of the whirlpool of gayety and dissipation it had not been aware of.

I was old enough to judge of the true worth of those people when their leader was suddenly taken away—their

leader, with whom they had so long been associated, in whose presence they had so bravely borne their shields, in whose fêtes and tournaments they had participated.

Scarcely one-half of them troubled themselves to show their last respects to the deceased, and that half consisted of those to whom my father had shown the least preference.

A dead man is very silent; he is so much the more silent if, in his lifetime, he created a stir.

For some days he furnishes material for general conversation, in which ingratitude forms the greater part; he is only missed by those in whose selfish hearts he has left a void, and only there until they succeed in finding something else to fill it.

It was so miserable in our castle after the funeral. Everything about us reminded us of our father's love of life, of his hospitality, of the liberality with which he scattered his wealth abroad.

The magnificent, luxurious rooms, the finely laid out parks, the flotilla on the lake used for regattas, the archery-ground, the stables with their marble mangers and valuable horses, the piquers and huntsmen, the pack of hounds, the numerous lackeys with gold braid on their liveries, the carriages, all mourned the departed.

But all seemed selfishly to ask, "What will become of us?"

When we returned from the cemetery, we were so tired and weary of life that we felt as if we would gladly lie with our loved one.

The court-yard was unnaturally quiet; the orange buds were opening their chalices.

The servants crept about just as unnaturally and silently in their mourning. Only my father's favorite horse stood at the door of the stable and neighed loudly

for his master, whom he had just escorted to his last resting-place.

When we reached our room, throwing back her black veil, still weeping and pale, my mother pressed me to her and hung over me a long time.

She held my hand long and fast; hers was cold and lifeless; occasionally a convulsive sob shook her frame.

In that sad, painful moment it seemed to both of us as if we were poor, deserted orphans, as if we had lost our protector, our support.

It sent a thrill of pain through me, as, with my arm about my weeping mother, my gaze chanced to rest upon the long suite of state-rooms, the doors leading to which were ajar.

This splendor seemed to me like sacrilege, like a mockery of our abandonment, of our helplessness. It was as if all this must suddenly vanish, for he was gone who had been master of it all, whose judgment and taste had provided this luxury, and without whom everything seemed to me as nothing.

Those fine oil-paintings my father had chosen, with his love and taste for the fine arts; those onyx vases, those urns, those mosaic floors and tables, those statues and busts, all those quaint and tasteful emblems he had collected with a great amount of care and expense at Paris, Rome, and Madrid. But they now gave us no pleasure, for his tall, imposing form no more would rule over these rooms, because those inanimate objects, which had been placed there by him, seemed only designed for his delight.

Her husband's death had affected my mother deeply.

It had become necessary for her thoughtful, tender nature to cling to that majestic form, especially when she retired to the small world which contained her affec-

tions and ideas, during the pauses which my father's hospitality allowed, and in those pauses she felt doubly happy.

Though as hostess she had had very little care, for my father had his servants so trained that each knew the duties he had to perform, and things always passed off smoothly, for his wealth was sufficient for all such arrangements, and his entertainments seemed to be guided by an invisible hand, so that he himself had not the least responsibility.

That gay life, the always-stirring mood of the guests, the walking and driving in the park, on the lake, in the woods, lasted from spring until late in the autumn, and scarcely had the last guests departed, when our trunks were packed, and we left for a visit to one of the European capitals.

My mother, who at the time of my father's death was still a lovely woman, was always the life of the party, the fairy who held sway.

Now suddenly all had grown dark and dreary.

Her grief for her loved one, the gloom about her, where every object spoke of him, moved her deeply, for she was now quite alone; of her nearest relatives only a delicate aunt remained, and she had never liked my father. And if her thoughts, seeking protection and comfort, turned to her son, she was compelled to make an acknowledgment which wounded her maternal heart.

What could not be prevented, had slowly come to pass. My father's indulgence had allowed Hermann his own way until his disposition, instead of being kind and thoughtful as it might have been, developed into a cold insensibility.

Every sign of feeling that he saw only awakened his scorn; he even mocked at common sympathy, and often

brutally trampled upon it. He was, or rather believed himself to be, a cavalier, though he misused his rights most unscrupulously.

What his father had been he was, with the exception of feeling and intellect.

Whereas his father had always, in the face of his exalted position, conscientiously fulfilled his duties as a cavalier with tact and magnanimity, Hermann only considered his own rights; and these to him had no limits, no laws except those which were written in his breviary, at the head of which stood: Contempt for all who were not his equals by birth, and woe to his equal, if he did the least thing which could be construed into diminution of the admiration due to the handsome, wealthy, and illustrious Count von M.!

It is true, as a stripling of twenty he was the ideal of a cavalier. To-day I can see the proud, contented gaze of my father when upon his death-bed, rest upon Hermann, whose hand he held in his, while we stood weeping beside him.

That last look must have satisfied him, for he had no room in his dying heart for his wife and daughter. He saw his youth renewed in his boy. He thought us safe in Hermann's care; Hermann, who he fondly believed had inherited his high-mindedness, his generosity, his knightly virtues.

Indeed, whoever saw Hermann was fascinated by his noble appearance at the first glance, and I could easily understand the ladies' admiration for him, an admiration which I myself could not withhold when I saw him, even though the next moment a certain fear crept over me.

At the same age my father must have been like Hermann, for the latter was a speaking likeness of the former. Tall and slender, with broad, strong shoulders, his whole

figure well-proportioned, carriage erect yet graceful, with an aristocratic countenance, every feature of which bespoke noble birth, a high forehead, clear, large, masterful eyes, dark brown curly hair, a slightly curved nose, a rounded chin, an incipient moustache upon his upper lip, a pale complexion, small hands and feet notwithstanding his height—such was Hermann in his twentieth year; an ideal of manly beauty which compelled admiration; Providence seemed to have showered upon him all her gifts.

One circumstance, however, proved what his nature was; it was that my mother trembled in his presence, and one of those paroxysms seized her when, an hour after the funeral, we were sitting weeping and disconsolate in our room.

The hand which my mother held before her eyes shook, as she was rudely awakened from her grief by the clinking of spurs in the adjoining room.

She passed both hands over her brow involuntarily, dried her tears, and looked up confusedly, almost unconsciously.

The tramping of horses in the court below broke the stillness.

Hermann entered. He had already laid aside his mourning, and only wore a band of crape upon his arm, which paltry token was all that he deigned to devote to the immeasurable love which his father had lavished upon him.

Nothing in his face betrayed a sign of sorrow, nor even respect for the dead. What put him out of temper was the grief of those about him, the dullness which annoyed him, the oppressive solemnity of the occasion which caused him intolerable ennui.

The appearance of him, who from this time forth

should be our natural protector, who should offer us consolation and courage, only terrified us.

Standing by my mother's side, I unwittingly drew closer to her, and she laid her hand upon my arm.

Hermann was certainly paler than usual; the expression of his eyes was less overbearing but not less self-conscious. His carriage was as proud as ever, his step as firm, and as an example of his disposition, he had not even the feeling to spare us the clinking of his spurs.

With his whip, gray gloves, and riding boots he entered mother's small salon, which communicated with her sitting-room, and in which she was accustomed to sit with Eugenie and me.

"I fear I have disturbed you, mother," said he, remaining standing several steps from her, visibly disappointed in his expectation of her turning her attention to him.

A pause ensued, during which my mother kept her face buried in her handkerchief, for she was trying to gain the necessary composure with which to answer her son.

Meanwhile I glanced at my brother questioningly. It was impossible for me to conceal from him my astonishment, my indignation at his heartlessness, although I had expected nothing else from him.

Hermann saw the look and ignored it. I had always seemed to him a person of very little consequence, who, now that he was master, had sunk into a nonentity. Besides, it had been his principle for years to snub me if I, as his sister, attempted to make suggestions to him which our mother lacked the courage to make.

I did not lay much stress upon it then, for such is often the case between brothers and sisters when they are under the care and authority of their parents; a girl's

common sense tries to assert itself, and probably in many instances is at fault; but to-day I felt as if it were the duty of us both equally to protect and love our mother.

In the meantime my mother raised her head; eyes heavy with tears looked up at her son.

How dearly would she have liked in her misery to press him to her breast, to seek comfort from him, but Hermann's countenance did not betray the least emotion; only peevishness, impatience, and disgust were stamped upon his cold features, and sorrowfully, her maternal heart deeply wounded, she again rested her head in her hands.

"You do not disturb me," she answered slowly, almost inaudibly.

"The notary desires my presence urgently; I shall ride into town with George to night, and shall probably remain there several days."

My mother did not answer him. She sat there motionless, her head in her hands.

Hermann bit his lip; he waited a moment. Then suddenly he approached her, took her hand from her forehead, pressed a light kiss upon it, and avoiding my reproachful glance, he passed out.

A sigh escaped my mother's breast, as Hermann's steps resounded louder than before in the rooms.

Had his appearance been for a purpose? I was almost certain of it. He probably wished from the very first to call my mother's attention to his future position.

How easily might he have done so without wounding his mother at the moment when she was in the deepest grief!

As a result of his training, my brother naturally considered her his adversary. As a boy, even though he knew that when she was compelled to complain of him

to his father she tried to excuse his insolence as far as lay in her power, he saw in the course she pursued a hostile purpose, and his rudeness by degrees took the form of defiance of, or opposition to, everything that she wished, and we had feared and expected that as soon as he became independent, it would turn to utter disregard.

Hermann's designs had been fully accomplished; from that moment our poor mother knew what she had to expect. His masterful, self-conscious air rather than his behavior explained that.

CHAPTER IV.

The deceased's will, which, in case he should die before Hermann had attained the age of twenty, declared the latter from the time of his death of age, and desired that he should take the management of the estates, was known to my mother.

We suspected that Hermann would make use of this disposition almost before the coffin was in the ground, and so it was.

It was with that object that he rode into town. He returned home after everything was settled, and took possession of his affairs with an energy which surprised us, and made us fear that he had more energy than capability.

Weeks, months passed.

Hermann soon grew tired of the castle, as during the prescribed time of mourning he could not enjoy himself in his way. He left us long periods at a time, and invariably returned more disagreeable and reckless. He came and went, taking the coldest farewells and greeting us just as coldly.

The seriousness which had marked my mother's manner since her trouble, her calm bearing toward everyone, her resignation, the simplicity of her dress and habits after the gay life she had led, were not to Hermann's taste. All this caused him annoyance, to which he did not dare give vent in words, but which was visible in his manner.

He seemed to feel it an insult that his mother did not make use of all the luxury with which, following his father's example, he surrounded the household; that she drew back timidly as soon as she encountered it, which did not mean that all pleasure in life had vanished with her husband, that she wished to devote herself only to her daughter's education, but rather that she took no interest in worldly things.

Hermann considered this affectation. Grief for his father, he once declared, must, like everything else, have an end some time; the castle, which once had been the Mecca of the whole provincial nobility, and was still the pride of the province, should not be changed into a hermitage; neither could he understand such sentimentality as his mother exhibited, his mother who had once been so happy as the leader of society.

The first remark was a reproach, the last an insult, which it was evidently intended to be. Hermann received no answer.

The relations between Hermann and me naturally grew more strained. We had never had any love for one another, and now he tried to take the upper hand, of which I took no notice, and which it never occurred to me to oppose.

His abruptness to our mother took sometimes a tone, to me bordering on rudeness, when he saw that his superiority was not acknowledged.

Eugenie, with whom I had been brought up, had become to me a dear friend, and was also looked upon as such by my mother.

She was the prototype of a French woman, not handsome, not even pretty, on account of the irregularity of her features, but piquant, interesting, and graceful.

She was not as tall as I, and had the greatest admiration for me on account of my height, just as she had always had when we were children, and she very often led me to my mother's portrait, in order to show me that she had not been mistaken in her prophecy.

If Eugenie's form had not grown, her mind had developed. She possessed that French esprit, which easily charms, but she possessed more than that, for she had taken advantage of our joint tuition, and had learnt a great deal.

She was refined and pleasing in her conversation, full of originality, in which childish naïveté was coupled with true intelligence, which she introduced into her conversation with charming modesty, while she had a droll way of speaking which would amuse a whole company.

Toward my mother and me she was very loyal, and her loyalty was free from all toadyism; to me, especially, it took the form of an attentiveness, which sought to divine my slightest wish, and she was happy if she succeeded.

Only when Hermann was present, she seemed embarrassed and nervous. I often noticed how she secretly trembled if he came in, how she tried to avoid him, and invented pretexts in order to do so.

Hermann never bestowed a kind word upon her, since it did not befit his present position to make a butt of her as he had done when a boy.

Something had befallen the poor girl, which depressed her.

She loved to fly to the woods when she mused. She would at such times unfasten one of the small boats on the lake, and row herself across to the opposite side. There she would sit for hours in a favorite spot with a book in her hand, and when she came back, would imitate the voices of the birds, which she had heard there.

One afternoon we waited in vain for her return. The boat was still on the shore, a sign that Eugenie was yet in the woods.

When the sun set, we sent out servants to seek her; but while they were gone, Eugenie returned, accompanied by one of our foresters, a man seventy years of age, who, according to my father's will had been pensioned.

Eugenie, notwithstanding the exercise she had had, was as pale as death. She shyly avoided our questions, escaped to her room, locked herself in, did not appear at supper, and gave indisposition as her excuse.

In the meantime, the forester told us his story. The old man had found the "French girl," as she was called in the village, in the woods bound to a tree with her hands behind her; the young lady, he said, had at first earnestly begged and then strictly forbidden him to tell anything, but he dared not remain silent, for it would be necessary to watch the woods carefully. The young lady would not confess who had committed the deed, but there was no doubt that it must have been some prowling vagabonds and so forth.

We had to knock several times before we could prevail upon Eugenie to open her door.

We found her undressed, with both of her wrists bound with wet cloths; she was grave and reserved, but calm. My mother examined her wrists in spite of her resistance. They bore swollen, bloody streaks—the forester's story was confirmed.

No questioning, no command of my mother could induce Eugenie at first to speak. She finally declared that while sitting in the woods deep in her book, she was attacked from behind and bound. It was evident that someone wished to rob her, but had been disturbed by the forester.

That Eugenie was not speaking the truth was proved by her wrists. Her arms must have been bound at least an hour, if not longer. Her watch and chain lay upon her toilet table. Had she been attacked by robbers, they would have had plenty of time to possess themselves of those things.

At Eugenie's request, we left her; she complained that she felt very nervous and tired.

My mother was perplexed; she was silent the remainder of the evening. We sat on the veranda; she, supporting her chin in her hand, and looking down upon the village at our feet, in which village one light after another began to glimmer.

When we heard loud, quick steps, my mother started violently.

It was Hermann, who, without noticing us, entered the door and went to his room.

A suspicion crossed my mind that probably accorded with my mother's thoughts.

Early the following morning Eugenie asked to see the latter.

She was still pale; her manner was confused and disturbed; her voice trembled. Eugenie came to ask for her dismissal. She wished to return to France.

As my mother stared at her in astonishment, took her hand, and implored her to tell her what had happened to her, she shook her head; tears then started from her eyes; she threw herself before my mother on her

knees, thanked her between her sobs for the kindness she had shown her, and confessed that she, herself, could not make up her mind to go; still she had to leave us.

When my mother found out that she could not dissuade the unhappy girl, she sent for me.

Eugenie fell upon her knees before me; she clung to me; her sobs were loud and heart-rending; begged my forgiveness if what she was doing seemed like ingratitude; assured us that all the kindness which we had shown her would never be forgotten by her; that to her dying day she would be grateful to us.

When we had succeeded in quieting her, she grew reserved again. Nothing could induce her to tell us the truth, which we were certain she had not spoken, and both of us trembled when we thought of what it might be.

We were successful in changing Eugenie's decision. She gave in to my mother's remonstrances.

That evening I surprised Eugenie in an attempt at flight. I had no suspicion of how hard it had been to bring herself to do it, and what caused her to do so. Had I only allowed her to do as she pleased, for her own sake! I made her promise never to attempt such a thing again. I even managed to call up a smile; but it was forced, to give me pleasure.

Two days afterward, my brother spoke of the occurrence in my mother's presence. He had only heard of it from his valet, he said, and something else must be back of it. That Eugenie was an amorous hussy, like all French women; her walks in the woods were probably rendezvous; the forester had very likely surprised her at something of the kind, and she had induced him to relate this fable by giving him a *pour-boire*. He would see to it at once; his sister's close intimacy with such a

creature had always been a thorn in his eye, and he would know how to do away with it at the right time. The Countess von M. must not associate with this "woman"; and if his sister could not break with that person altogether, she should at least be made to know her place. Our father had brought up the girl as a maid, and as such he wished her to be treated in the castle from that time forth. Moreover, he had long had an idea of marrying her to the young village schoolmaster, but after the scandal which had occurred, he would only be able to induce him to take her as his wife by promising him a great deal.

My mother answered him just as decidedly. This was a matter which only concerned her, in which she only had to decide, and he would be kind enough to refrain from all interference.

Hermann, who was driven to extremities by his mother's opposition, sent to the village immediately for the schoolmaster.

He was a young simpleton, fresh from the seminary, who had recently stepped into his dead father's place. He came into the room like a malefactor; my mother sat at the window, silent and composed, whilst Hermann, with his hands behind him, paced to and fro defiantly.

In my mother's presence, Hermann ordered the lackeys to fetch the "French woman" immediately, and with a flushed face continued his walk.

Perfectly calm and self-possessed, my mother sat there, determined to use her authority at the last moment.

The servant returned.

Mademoiselle Eugenie refused to appear before his excellency, he reported.

Hermann clinched his fist; the veins on his forehead swelled; his eyes rolled in their sockets.

"I command her to come at once, or she shall be dragged here!" he cried out.

The servant went.

My mother tried to rise, but sank back again upon the couch. I could see from the adjoining room how pale she turned; but, knowing my brother's vehemence, I dared not go to her assistance. Nevertheless, I determined to interfere if worst came to worst.

Several painful minutes passed. Hermann's heavy steps resounded on the floor.

"Mademoiselle Eugenie," I now heard the servant announce, "refuses to come. She left her room, flew through the corridor, down the steps, and across the court, before I could prevent her."

Hermann stared at the servant.

I drew a deep breath, but my heart was beating wildly for my poor friend's sake, for I knew of what my brother was capable.

"Follow her! she has no doubt made for the woods!" cried Hermann, in a voice like thunder. "Let the dogs loose on the hussy!"

"Hermann!" now cried my mother, springing up and approaching him commandingly.

"Go! you know my orders!" cried Hermann to the irresolute servant. "Unloose the dogs; they will be set on you if you do not mind!"

The servants had just gone out, when I ventured to appear at the door.

My brother was beside himself with anger, while the young schoolmaster, with a stupid, puzzled expression, stood at the door and turned his hat over and over in his hands.

I was indignant, and determined to protect Eugenie. My brother should not dare to hurt a hair of her

head. A scornful glance from Hermann increased my anger.

Just then I met my mother's imploring gaze. I saw that she now, as always at a critical juncture, had not lost her tact and self-control.

It was evidently her object to let them bring Eugenie into the salon, even if she were brought by force, and then stretch her protecting arm over her.

I felt that it would be wiser to leave everything to my mother, although I was very anxious about my friend. My heart was in my mouth; I was filled with a deep aversion to my brother, for if I had until now entertained a doubt of Hermann himself having a hand in that shameful ill-treatment of the poor, defenseless girl, it was confirmed by his rage against her, whom, up to this time, he had simply treated as an inferior, without really harming her.

Loathing, the deepest contempt, nothing else could I feel that day for my own brother, whose brutality went so far as to set the dogs upon Eugenie!

Suddenly Hermann halted. He approached the window in order to see into the court-yard, and convince himself that his orders were being obeyed. I took advantage of this to take my place behind my mother's couch. I really took some courage when I saw her so composed. Caressingly I laid my hand upon her shoulder.

"Leave the room, Paula!" she said, loud enough for Hermann to hear. "What will be decided upon between my son and me to-day, I do not wish you to hear!"

In answer to that, Hermann beat a tattoo impatiently and vigorously on the window. He did not vouchsafe my mother's remark a word.

This command was welcomed by me, for I was uneasy lest some injury might be offered to my friend, although

I felt almost assured that Hermann's orders would not be carried out by the servants, who were fond of Eugenie.

I flew through the long corridor and hall.

Scarcely had I reached the *perron*, when a voice from the court called up to me:

"Mademoiselle Eugenie has thrown herself into the lake!"

All grew dark before my eyes; my brain whirled; I clung to the balustrade.

"Help! help!" cried I, almost breathless with anxiety.

"The fishermen are already there! there will be no danger! the lake is not so deep in that place!" I heard another voice say, while all was confusion in the court.

This encouragement aroused my hope, but my limbs trembled so that I could not move from the spot upon which I stood.

Then all at once the spell was broken. I rushed down the steps, through the court and park, to the lake.

Upon the spot where my father's small flotilla lay, which had often borne us over the blue waters, a crowd had assembled, which gave way when I came up. I saw the fisherman bearing in his arms a blue, drenched burden, which he laid on the little landing place, while the curious pressed about him.

I do not know how I broke through that living wall. I knelt beside Eugenie, who showed no signs of life. I bent over her, I shook her, I called to the servants to ride to town quickly and get a doctor; but was it fright which paralyzed them, or was it the order which Hermann had issued? No one stirred!

"It is not necessary, Countess!" said the fisherman, taking his hand from Eugenie's heart. "Take courage;

her heart still beats! She has hardly had time to recover yet! I was busy in one of the boats, and jumped in after her at once, before she had time to reach the deep part! Only send away all these people, so that we can open her dress; she must have air! This is the third time that I have rescued someone from a watery grave!"

In the meantime, changing his mind suddenly, he lifted the light burden upon his shoulders.

"Come to my hut, Countess!" cried he; "we shall soon revive her! But send the rest away!"

I followed him breathlessly. The thought of losing Eugenie, my only friend, was to me unbearable.

Never had I considered her pretty, or even passably so; but as she lay upon the fisherman's bed, her face wore such a strange expression that I had to admire her involuntarily. About her closed eyes lay something inexpressibly sad; her pallid lips, half open, seemed to wish to tell of her unhappiness, and her wet, flowing hair revealed two delicately-veined brows.

It was strange that all of her features should be pretty, and yet that the *tout-ensemble* should lack the harmony of beauty.

However, no time was to be lost.

I could not bear to have the fisherman lay his rough hand upon her. I hastily opened her bodice, and, following the directions of the experienced old man standing behind me, chafed her breast, her brow, and hands, and with a cry of delight welcomed the first signs of life.

My friend's eyes opened; she raised her hand, stared first at me and then at the fisherman, pressed both hands to her forehead, in order to collect her thoughts, and then hastily raised herself.

"Where am I?" she asked, looking at her wet clothing. "What has happened to me?"

With fear depicted on her countenance, she glanced about her.

"Eugenie, do you not know me? It is I, Paula!" cried I, grasping her cold hand.

"Yes, yes," she exclaimed confusedly, blankly.

"I shall have to scold you; you have occasioned me unutterable anxiety, you naughty girl!"

"I?"

Eugenie now came to herself.

"Yes, yes; I remember now!"

The recollection of her deed and the cause of it returned to her.

"I could not do otherwise!" cried she, as she let her hand fall upon her wet dress. "I wish I were lying at the bottom of the sea!"

"Why, Eugenie, that is wicked! You have sinned against God, against yourself, and against us!"

Eugenie, who was very pious, gazed before her sadly and slowly shook her head.

"Oh, *c'était plus fort que moi!*" cried she, returning to her mother tongue, as she always did when affected.

I comforted, I encouraged her with words of consolation and assurance; I told her of the resoluteness with which my mother would protect her; I assured her that both my mother and I would guard her from all injustice, and then ordered one of the servants waiting outside to call my maid quickly, and tell her to bring other clothes for Eugenie.

Eugenie was suddenly seized with a chill which shook her whole frame.

"You are ill, Eugenie!" cried I, as I sent the fisher-

man away, and helped her change her garments. I then wrapped her in everything that I could possibly find in the hut, led her from the wet bed to an old, rickety easy-chair covered with much-worn leather, and then went out to look after the servants.

The curious people outside had been satisfied. I sent my mother a message to the effect that Eugenie seemed to be ill, she should send immediately for the doctor, and begged her to take an interest in the miserable girl.

My mother came. Gravely but kindly, with a cordiality which did the unfortunate creature good, she approached her. Eugenie seized her hand and raised it to her lips, yet not without a shy, questioning glance at her.

"Compose yourself, Eugenie!" said my mother. "You are under my protection! From this time many changes will be made in our household! Be without fear and trust to me!"

I now understood the meaning of her words—"what will be decided upon between my son and me to-day."

Although my mother's disposition would not allow of an open rupture between herself and her son, still I knew that she had long considered her position humiliating, that her maternal heart was battling with a decision, which must finally be made.

And this decision Hermann had learned in the castle when my mother heard the news of Eugenie's restoration to life. Then so much the more was her indignation increased at Hermann's brutal treatment.

An unkind remark of my brother's, upon the receipt of this news, forced her to tell him what she had decided upon. She wished to leave the castle.

Hermann received this information with indifference. Probably it was agreeable to him, for it freed him from a

domestic life which was burdensome to him, which subjected his actions to continual notice and criticism.

"I can not dictate to you," had been his only reply; indeed, only one thing about the matter did not seem to please him, and that was that by our departure the despised Frenchwoman would be out of the range of his revenge, his persecution.

His delight at my mother's decision he could not conceal from his steward.

"Thank God," said he to him that evening, "I shall be freed from those women! But that hussy shall remember me!"

My mother and I heard this, which he in all probability said loud enough for us to hear. Indignantly and silently I looked at my mother, but her face was cold and calm.

CHAPTER V.

The next day, Eugenie having recovered sooner than we expected, preparations were begun for our departure.

My poor friend was in a state of nervous excitement which caused her to start when a leaf of the wild vines which shaded our veranda fell upon her work or an insect buzzed about her.

I watched her unnoticed; she lived in one continual agitation, which might have been occasioned by shame at her attempt at suicide, or fear of something unknown even to herself.

The cause of this could easily be guessed; she was evidently afraid of my brother, of some malicious act on his part, and I tried to calm her by repeating that in a few days we should leave the castle. And even then it seemed as if she were not satisfied.

How inconsistent is a maiden's heart! How far from me was it then to suspect that Eugenie, notwithstanding all the unkindness which my brother had shown her from the time he was a child, if she did not really love him, still had a weakness for him, which bade her forgive all, forget all the tears which he had already caused her.

Even on the afternoon after her desperate deed, as she, still weak and exhausted, lay upon the bed, and I sat with her in her room, it was impossible to induce her to confess that she had Hermann to thank for those red streaks upon her wrists, the traces of which had not yet disappeared.

She remained obstinately silent, and no entreaties succeeded in drawing any satisfaction from her.

Had I then known what I found out later, I should have understood what had driven her to choose the lake rather than my mother's protection from my brother's cruelty. I should then have rightly comprehended her "c'est plus fort que moi!"

Hermann's personal beauty unfortunately charmed all the ladies; and the openness with which they offered their admiration sufficed to make my brother undervalue it, and treat it, in many instances, with disdain.

He was capable of trampling upon the feelings of the loveliest woman, if she were foolish enough to show him that she had any liking for him. At twenty years of age he spoke of women as inferior beings, and even in my mother's presence, he occasionally dared to make such remarks; he spoke disparagingly of young ladies who had visited us, whom we had cause to esteem, but who had probably naïvely or imprudently allowed him to read their hearts, and he seemed to make merry at the attention they paid him.

If it is a weakness of our sex, it is at the same time their ruin, to forget themselves for one moment so far as to worship the lords of creation, whose selfishness knows no gratitude, no forbearance, no mercy!

Poor Eugenie had been weak enough to do this. The cavalier in my brother had dazzled her, and where as a child she had only tears of pardon in her eyes for all his mischievous pranks, it had grown into a habit, a weakness with her, which compelled her to pardon everything he did, even if it wounded her.

Eugenie was such an unselfish, kind-hearted soul, that whatever happened to her, she could pardon; that is—where she loved.

I did not know, and dreaded knowing, what had happened in the wood; but when Hermann, in all probability suspecting Eugenie's love for him, put the finishing touches to his cruelty, she would rather have inflicted punishment upon herself than have been obliged to betray him.

Perhaps I was correct in my surmises that Eugenie did not take walks in the woods without a purpose; that she met Hermann there, and possibly this might have led to meetings whose issue she might have had cause to fear had she not been blind!

Had I known this, I do not know if I could have been angry with her; Eugenie was not sensual. I had never noticed anything about her that had betrayed signs of levity; I was then of the opinion that prudence governed all of her actions.

How many innumerable times had I occasion to observe her self-control, her wise calculations, that is for her age, a certain premature philosophy; and how in the midst of her greatest exuberance of spirits, to which her sense of humor led her, she would suddenly collect herself,

assume a knowing air, and denounce herself for her silliness!

And this girl was unhappy enough to love a man, who, if he despised the whole female sex, considered her, on account of her social standing, the lowest and most contemptible; who, after she had perhaps been foolish enough to show him the least sign of interest, must become her ruin, if she, instead of twice as eagerly fleeing from him, threw herself in his way.

As I knew my brother well, I imagined that at that rencontre he had discovered more character in Eugenie than he had thought for, and on that account had vented his rudeness upon her.

But who can tell how great a cause or provocation a nature like his would need to bring about a burst of passion? Hermann could indulge his wild instincts without so weighty a motive as hate, for such outbursts were second nature to him, and he practiced them in the province of his right as master, upon which he laid the highest value.

What was a poor creature like Eugenie, who was entirely at his mercy, to him, though she were under his mother's protection—his mother, who in his eyes, was also only a—woman!

Our departure was to take place in a few days. About a week had passed since that scene; my mother had a number of calls to pay in town, and numerous business matters to attend to.

The relations between her and Hermann were cold and formal. That scene was not mentioned. My brother knew the cause of her coolness; he saw it in our preparations for a journey and my mother's business arrangements.

Nothing betrayed that he repented in the least; repent-

ance was a stranger to him. It seemed to me as if he were quite satisfied, for, as he had said, our departure would free him from our troublesome criticism, though, indeed, he had never paid much attention to it.

Moreover, something else had happened which made our stay at the castle unpleasant, yes, even uncomfortable, as Hermann found no pleasure in protecting us poor women.

In my father's time, there had been many complaints of idle, vagabondish tramps, who committed all sorts of trespasses on the surrounding country, who set fire to several barns, and in the midst of the excitement perpetrated bold thefts.

The large forests of the neighboring estates, as well as our own, afforded a ready shelter for these people. Several individuals, one of whom lived in our village, had been suspected, but nothing could be proven against them. So they had to have the woods searched, to put on a double guard in the village, and after that people were more contented, as no excesses had been committed for quite awhile.

Then all were again alarmed by the news of a murder, which had occurred in the woods near our castle.

The nephew of our forester, who lived in the woods, was found dead there in a spot thickly overgrown with bracken. A bullet had pierced his heart, passed out at his back, and imbedded itself an inch deep in the bark of a tree.

When my brother, as lord of the manor, was informed of this early in the morning as he was dressing, he exclaimed that it did not concern him; they should acquaint the police of it; no doubt incendiaries were again at work in the vicinity.

A groom at once mounted his horse and hurried to town with the announcement.

We begged Hermann to take some men and hasten to the place of disaster.

He said, however, that he did not wish to be disturbed at his breakfast; it was the affair of the old forester and his family. Why had he not watched the woods, as it was his duty to do? and which he, of course, had neglected, for he grew daily blinder. Now he could take the consequences.

This event affected my mother and me deeply, setting aside the fear with which it inspired us. The unfortunate man had been well-educated; his uncle had furnished him with the means with which to attend the academy, from which he had recently returned. When he helped his uncle in his work, he did so because the latter was half-blinded from the effects of rheumatic fever, and he was bound to him by gratitude.

They said that he only staid with the forester for the sake of his daughter, his pretty cousin, who often visited Eugenie; who, when we had teased her, assured us that their liking was mutual, but there was nothing serious in it, for her cousin had found a sweetheart in town, while at the academy.

Hermann, who once met us at the forester's, reproved us; he said it was very unbecoming for us to go there. But we knew that he was always glad of an excuse to stop himself!

Hermann's indifference about the murder vexed us. Still, it was his nature. Sympathy for the troubles of others had always seemed like sentimentality to him. Therefore my mother felt that she must do more in the matter; while Hermann was amusing himself that morning in the stables as if

nothing had occurred, she sent messengers to town and to the forester's.

Although Hermann said: "What can we do?" at her command the steward had to repair with some men to the spot and set up a guard, so that the curious might not possess themselves of any objects which might lead to the detection of the murderer.

The steward was to see to matters at the forester's, to assure him and his daughter of our heartfelt sympathy, and to tell him that my mother would have come in person had she not been afraid.

In the course of the morning I saw a carriage containing some gentlemen pass by the castle on their way to the woods, guided by the groom and followed by a number of mounted *gens d'armes*. They staid at the forester's all that day, and came again the next and the next.

That same person, of whom I have already spoken, an unemployed day-laborer, was arrested on the strongest suspicion. They found a gun concealed, a valuable fowling-piece, with cartridges, which must surely have been stolen. The bullet which was taken from the bark of the oak tree exactly fitted the barrel.

At the time of the murder this man had not been at home, but said that he was out looking for mushrooms, which he sold in town in order to earn his daily bread.

One of the police officers who reported to my mother, told us that at first they had thought it was robbery attended by murder, but no robbery had been committed, as they had found the man's watch and purse in his room; still, it was not improbable that such a thing had been intended.

It was very plain that between the murdered man and his assailant a struggle had taken place, and probably the

latter had seized the former by the breast and thrown him down.

Then, as he tried to rise, the huntsman must have placed his gun on his breast and sent a bullet through it; the burnt places about the breast on his clothing, and the course of the bullet, showed quite plainly that there could have been very little space between the muzzle of the gun and the breast of the murdered man. Death must have been instantaneous. According to all appearances it looked as if the man had been just in the act of lighting his pipe, for one was found quite near his body, and some matches were strewn upon the ground, which must have fallen from a tinder-box, which was missing.

The forester's daughter described it minutely, for it had been a gift from her; the silver plate bore his name, "Gustav Richtmann," upon it.

In vain had they examined the ground round about, mowed down the grass and weeds, cut off the lowest boughs of the trees, in case it might have lodged there when they were wrestling; it was not to be found.

It was natural to conclude finally, that robbery had been intended, when the tinder-box could not be discovered, for had not lives been often sacrificed for less than that? The murderer had only taken what in his hurry he could find.

The laborer, who was in custody, had obstinately denied the deed. Two barrels of the gun had been emptied. He had been examined at once in the village, but confessed nothing, maintained his innocence by all that was holy, and drew forth a whole bag of mushrooms, which, he said, he had gathered in quite another direction.

However, the magistrates were convinced that they would soon bring him to terms, for he had often been tried before.

After the officers left, our feeling of uneasiness increased tenfold.

Only Hermann did not seem nervous. He took his usual rides, accompanied by his confidential valet, a peasant lad, who from his youth had put up with all Hermann's unkindness, if only my father would repay him for his pain with a few pieces of money, and later he became my brother's indispensable, discreet cat's-paw.

While my mother was much disturbed and longed to be gone, Eugenie appeared to be in a kind of dream. She confessed to me that the thought of this murder kept her continually in a kind of ague; that she had cold chills down her back; that the excitement had totally relaxed her nerves, and therefore she was obliged to leave the room when the circumstances of the murder were mentioned.

Since the news of the crime which was perpetrated in our immediate neighborhood had reached us, she said with a face deathly pale, since she had seen the strangers and police officers going in and out of the castle, had heard their *gens d'armes* with their clanking sabres, since everything spoke only of this murder, she felt as if she were paralyzed, and indeed she was always in such a nervous condition that she started at every sound.

As she, standing at the window, saw the *gens d'armes* leading away the man suspected of the murder, with his hands bound behind him, a cry escaped her; she put her hands before her face and turned away.

When my mother, who was near her, reproved her, she begged her pardon. She could not bear to see such things, she said. The thought of the poor wife, whom he was leaving, of the innocent children who would now suffer, was terrible.

Indeed, an hour later she was with the woman, and had taken her a considerable sum of money, although she told me it was only a trifle, and asked me to speak to my mother about them, so that the poor woman with her children should not be left to starve.

Toward evening of the same day, when I sought and found her in her room, she was reclining in the American rocking-chair, which I had given her, as she had always wished for one; what had happened, together with fear, had overpowered her.

I approached her. She was fast asleep, and breathing very irregularly.

Suddenly she moved her lips.

"*Non, non! Pour l'amour de Dieu!*" she whispered in her mother tongue, as she usually did when she talked in her sleep. "*Faut pas punir celui-là.*"

I was obliged to awaken her, as my mother needed her.

Eugenie opened her eyes, rubbed them, gazed wildly at me, sprang up, tottered, and was obliged to sit down in order to collect herself.

I had to bear with the poor girl, for she was still suffering from the effects of her rash attempt at suicide, and at times I feared that her mind had suffered from her leap into the sea.

It had only needed that terrible murder to make the already over-excited girl beside herself.

In the meantime, the remembrance of the deed did not die out, but not much was said about it. When it was mentioned, everybody knew the latest news, and what the court had decided. All this was nothing but gossip, for we only heard the truth; the suspected man had denied the charge, but could not prove an *alibi*, so suspicion still rested upon him.

CHAPTER VI.

Eight days had gone by. The time had arrived for our departure, which had been delayed owing to that unfortunate incident.

Eugenie took especial pains to conceal an inward unrest, which her face and her manner could not always mask.

As at that time I had no suspicion of what was passing within her, I put it down to the feverish after effects of her desperate deed, and paid less attention to it than I should have done.

For hours, sometimes, she would carefully keep out of our way.

On the morning of the day before our setting out, I accompanied my mother to town.

Eugenie was to go with us, but she refused with perceptible anxiety, and plead the necessity of arranging her wardrobe for our journey.

The peculiar pallor of her face, her haste in speaking, the timidity with which she sought to avoid my gaze, struck me.

“Eugenie, you are hiding something from me!”

“No, indeed! why should I? You know, countess, that I have never had any secrets from you!”

Eugenie’s voice trembled slightly.

She found some work to do, so that I should not see the sudden blush which suffused her cheeks, but which did not escape me.

“It would be better if you would drive with us!” I urged emphatically.

"Perhaps!" answered she, softly, still busied. "But your dresses need some attention, too, and you would be vexed with me if everything were not ready to-morrow morning!"

I knew that this pretext was very poor, for that was my maid's business, not hers.

"Well, *au revoir*, Eugenie!"

The carriage was at the door; I heard my mother's voice call my name.

"*Au revoir!*"

This last word seemed to require an effort. I looked once more into the room from the door, and saw that Eugenie turned hastily toward me, and then restrained herself.

As I, together with my mother, left the court-yard, and our carriage rolled along the high road lined with poplars, my mother broke the silence.

"Something must trouble Eugenie which she is keeping from us. She is absent-minded, nervous, and often has palpitation of the heart, which I never noticed before; in the morning, too, her eyes betray sleepless nights. It is strange what can be the matter with the poor girl!"

"It would be best, mother, if, when we return to-night, you would talk with her! She was always so frank; since that unlucky day she seems to have changed, and really since yesterday I can not understand her at all. She used to confide in me; now she does not do so. Formerly there was nothing that she kept from me; now she is reserved, and though I can excuse her nervousness, I think that talking about herself would comfort her." My mother was silent and seemed to be deep in thought. Perhaps she had seen through Eugenie's behavior better than I, and did not wish to tell me what she knew or suspected. At all events, she was uncom-

fortable, knowing Eugenie to be alone in the castle, and this feeling of uneasiness did not leave her in town, where she had several calls to pay and some matters to attend to; for, since my father's death, she had managed her own fortune and showed surprising cleverness and circumspection.

Returning toward four o'clock, somewhat sooner than we had anticipated, we found the servants in groups about the court-yard. At the sight of us they looked startled, whispered to one another, and showed other signs of surprise. The eyes of the women and girls were fastened on the small chapel, situated in the center of a Campo Santo; which chapel my father had had built very artistically, and upon the architecture of which he had expended much time and money.

The lackeys who received us seemed just as disturbed. My mother's maid, who was descending the stairs, upon seeing us, was visibly delighted; we both felt that something unusual must have happened.

"Thank God, that you have come, gracious madame," cried the woman, half aloud, so that the lackeys should not hear her, while she followed us up the steps.

"What is the matter, Gertrude?" asked my mother, turning to her as we reached the hall.

Gertrude waited until the servant had entered the corridor with the packages, and in the meantime sought for words in which to express herself.

"What is it, gracious countess? I do not quite understand, but ——"

"Where is Eugenie?" interrupted my mother, suspiciously.

"That is just it! My God! but it was a terrible scene to which we were all witnesses. Scarcely half an hour ago—my heart is throbbing yet—the count

sent for her. She obeyed his command. I saw her, deathly pale and tottering, creep through the corridor, and then I suspected no good. In vain I called out to her to hide until the countess returned; I even opened the door leading to the tower for her, to which only I have the key; but I might as well have talked to the wall; she did not hear; she seemed deaf and blind; I imagined that the count intended to do some mischief; she would not be held back. In the meantime I saw the priest and the village school-master enter the castle court and walk straight toward the chapel. The priest wore his vestments, and had under his arm the large book which he uses at weddings and baptisms; the school-master was dressed all in black, with white gloves, and looked like a ghost. Two people from the village walked behind them, their eyes on the ground like 'miserable sinners!' It was a procession as if someone were going to be executed. Then, in less than five minutes, we all saw the count, followed by Mademoiselle Eugenie more dead than alive, cross the castle steps to the chapel, whose door was locked behind them. God protect the poor girl. There is something dreadful happening to her, and in a holy place!"

With that Gertrude quickly crossed herself.

My mother and I stood there as if turned to stone.

Hermann and Eugenie, the priest, the school-master—all in the chapel—Hermann must have taken advantage of our absence to——

I dared not utter my thoughts.

Then my mother suddenly started up. Indignation and determination upon her brow.

"Go to your room, Paula!" she cried out to me, pale, solemn, and majestic, in a firm voice. "Go with my daughter!" she commanded her maid, and passing

down the corridor which led to the side steps, she disappeared.

I had neither the time nor the deliberation to oppose my mother's orders, or to follow her from my own inclination. Not being able to seek my room, I threw my shawl over the maid's arm and hurried into the hall. I needed air, and from there I could see the chapel and the door through which my mother would have to pass to enter it. A terrible fear possessed me and made me tremble, as I stood looking out upon the terrace.

My mother appeared after a few seconds in the Campo Santo and entered the chapel hastily.

How gladly would I have been with her! My heart beat violently and my gaze was fastened upon the chapel door, though my agitation would not allow me to picture to myself what was passing within.

Several minutes passed so.

Then my mother appeared in the gothic door. On her arm hung Eugenie, her pale face bowed down with shame, and with faltering limbs, rather being dragged away than walking; and hurrying toward the entrance to the Campo Santo was my maid, who, at a sign from my mother, seized the fainting girl by her other arm, and supporting her between them, they led her into the castle.

I, too, ran back, and just arrived there as Eugenie with a cry of anguish fainted at the foot of the stairs.

My mother was so wrought up that she had to lean against the balusters until she recovered. The maid, in the meantime, made vain attempts to raise the unconscious girl; we had to call more servants to help carry her up-stairs to her room, where, after working over her a long time, Eugenie regained consciousness.

What had taken place in the chapel?

Hermann had quietly prepared for that which he had threatened. He had no peace until he had carried out that threat in defiance of his mother's wishes, and in his vindictiveness had arranged everything so that we should know nothing about it.

The priest, a weak, old man, who served his patron, rather than his God, was obliged to consent to celebrate the marriage between Eugenie and the school-master, and the latter, a green, foolish fellow, was so dazed by the favors heaped upon him by his patron, by the good fortune which fell upon his stupid head, that anything could be done with him by his "Excellency."

But Eugenie?

It has always been incomprehensible to me, if she suspected any danger, she had not avoided it; why upon just that day had she staid at the castle? Her agitation, her poor excuse for remaining, both awoke the suspicion that she had expected something to happen, and if that was the case, why had she remained?

Had Hermann succeeded in detaining her by means of some deceit? Had her misguided heart trusted in him? Or rather—and these questions brought up others; had she consented to marry this blockhead in order to be near Hermann, to be able to see him, if only from the degraded position to which his dislike, his arbitrariness had assigned her?

Eugenie was to me an absolute conundrum; and I, too simple to solve it. Any one else I should have despised for such weakness, such slavish love, but for her I only felt the deepest pity.

And my sympathy increased as my mother depicted to me what had happened in the church, while that evening the poor creature lay in a high fever.

On her entrance, the priest was just about to join the

hands of those whom Hermann's malice was to sacrifice. Until then, Eugenie, probably summoning all her physical powers, had kept up; now with a cry of anguish she sank down, and my mother reached the altar just at the right time, that is, to catch her.

The sight of her froze the words on the tongue of the servile priest; her reproving glance made him fall back humbly, while his eyes sought Hermann, who was sitting in one of the front pews, as if he expected to shield him from the countess' anger.

Without taking the least notice of the others, she bent over the unconscious girl.

"Compose yourself, Eugenie! I command you!" she whispered in her ear, and essayed to raise her.

The girl trembled at these words. She recognized my mother's voice, opened her eyes, raised herself with difficulty, and breathing a "pardon!" allowed herself to be led from the altar.

Hermann, very much surprised at the interruption, had not dared to use his authority as lord of the manor in that place. With an oath, a few minutes afterward, he had left and gone into the park, slamming the door behind him.

The priest and the school-master left the church, followed by the witnesses, with eyes cast down, and crossed the court to a door near by, so as not to meet the stable boys who were standing about in groups, as also were the other men-servants and maids.

My mother kept her opinion of this strange affair to herself, for it was impossible that what was evident to my inexperience should have escaped her sharp eyes, although she saw less of Eugenie than I. She was very much put out, but was not angry with the unhappy girl.

The necessity of postponing our departure until her

recovery interfered with her plans. She had grown as fond as I had of Eugenie; to leave her behind, unprotected, to expose herself anew to Hermann's malice, was out of the question; we therefore had to be patient.

Eight days later, during which time we heard of my brother only through his servant, who said that he was preparing for a journey, we got ready for our trip.

My mother had talked seriously with Eugenie, as soon as she had sufficiently recovered, and had perhaps obtained from her the solution of the riddle. If Eugenie confessed, and what she said, I never found out. But she was more composed than she had been, and seemed to take an interest in our journey, which she had not taken before her illness.

Our parting from Hermann was distant and formal. As he stood at the carriage, he did not even glance at Eugenie. Occasionally I looked at her; she was pale; I could see how difficult it was for her to keep back her tears.

She drew her veil over her face, so as not to betray herself. My brother put out his hand to me without a word of farewell, neither did I deign to speak to him. Our carriage, which was to take us to the station, had not yet left the court, when he was in the saddle, on his way to visit a neighboring land-owner, with whom he had formed a close intimacy in his childhood; an intimacy which had its basis and permanence in like opinions, by which the friend, the elder, drew my brother all too early into a dissolute life.

CHAPTER VII.

How different everything is about us.

For a year we have been at the "Residence," the same at which my father played such a brilliant part, which he left through wounded vanity.

My mother did not choose this abode without a certain prejudice. Perhaps she was drawn thither by several, to her, well-known circles, which it interested her to see again. It had been her purpose only to remain a short time, but society welcomed us so warmly, that my mother very soon felt at home and decided to stay, as her often recurring illnesses had lately made traveling very difficult for her.

Here, where my father had shone at court as a handsome and clever young man, where he was remembered yet as such by the older ladies, it pleased them to approach the widow of the same, the woman who had succeeded in fascinating the once so unsusceptible Count von M.

Even the king himself, now a very aged man, seemed bent upon showing my mother how much he mourned the loss of an officer and friend, whose sensitiveness had not angered him, although he was not able to hinder his leaving the ministry. The king came in person to tell my mother how sincerely he had preserved the memory of the departed.

This probably influenced my mother to remain. She, who had formerly been the leader of society, now felt the need of shining in the same sphere by means of her mind, as she had done before by her beauty. She no

doubt desired to have a settled home, when she should grow tired of traveling; all thoughts of returning to the castle, she had entirely given up.

The castle, once the center of the aristocratic élite, had now, through Hermann's dissolute and etiquette-despising life, become the caravansary of adventurers.

The aristocracy avoided the place, for my brother had built a theatre of his own there, for which singers, both male and female, were sent to him from Paris, whom he entertained royally.

My father's tilt-yard had been turned into caroussels, for which he engaged horsewomen, and his hunts were always attended by Dianas, who were fêted by him as his guests.

There was, therefore, no prospect of our returning to the castle, so my mother bought a charming villa at the gates of the Residence, which she furnished with her refined and faultless taste. There was a possibility that Hermann would honor the Residence for a time with his presence during the winter season, which piece of news we first received from my mother's attorney.

Eugenie was not with us; we even knew nothing of her whereabouts.

The poor creature had changed altogether since we left the castle. Once so merry, so amiable, so entertaining, she became during the first part of our journey pensive, moody, and melancholy.

She seemed to belong to those natures that can only exist in extremes. Formerly she had been most careful about her toilet; she now neglected it, did not consider it worth her while to appear to the best advantage, scorned all personal vanity, and sought solitude.

Eugenie's face, her whole bearing, betrayed some trouble of the mind.

Her eyes had that glassy, lifeless appearance, her temples were sunken in; she sometimes complained of pain in them. About her mouth there was often a convulsive twitching, and if any one came upon her suddenly, she would start. She evidently was suffering from a nervous affection.

I noticed how my mother would often watch her mistrustfully, how she silently and disapprovingly would shake her head at these changes. It did not escape me that, in her manner toward her, my mother was at first cool and distant, and then gradually grew colder and more indifferent.

The consequence was an entire estrangement between them, in which I suffered the most; for, in spite of everything, Eugenie was as dear to me, and I thought it impossible that I could ever live without her.

My mother's dislike to her grew every day more pronounced; but the first time that she expressed it was when Eugenie, absent and disturbed as she often was, joined in the conversation in the presence of some visitors; my mother had often overlooked this before, but now she reprimanded her. I myself was startled.

I had been accustomed to so much forbearance and justness on my mother's part, that her correction surprised even me; I would gladly have been reproved in place of Eugenie.

The latter colored to her brows. Then her face turned pale. Her eyes moved from one object to another restlessly, probably to avoid my gaze, which, as she well knew, besought her to forgive my mother.

Eugenie that evening was humility personified. She seemed to wish to intimate that she knew her place as a servant, and would keep it. When I succeeded in obtaining a few moments alone with her, she said to me, with a

resignation in which mortification was plainly visible, that she knew, and had often said, she should abuse my mother's infinite kindness, which had led her to overstep the limits of her position.

My mother usually tried to make amends for any wound she inflicted, but toward Eugenie the next morning she was just as distant as she had been, much to my astonishment.

When I begged her not to hurt the poor girl's feelings, and said that she was an orphan, absolutely dependent upon us, my mother asked me, with her usual composure, not to interfere, and from that time forth I regarded Eugenie with a certain secret awe, saying to myself that my mother must have good reasons for treating her so; reasons which she had not named to me, and which therefore troubled and made me anxious.

What I had anticipated, came to pass.

In about eight days Eugenie asked my mother for her dismissal, which she accorded her.

Never had I dreamed that such a thing could happen, for Eugenie had always been to me as one of our own family, and as such had always been treated from a child.

I heard of it first through my maid, and hastened to my mother, as Eugenie had gone to town. She confirmed the news. I implored her for consideration, for forbearance with Eugenie—what would become of her!

"That she could not tell me herself, or she did not wish to tell me," answered my mother, gravely and quietly. I urged her not to let her go.

"It will do her good; and if not, she will be answerable for the rest," my mother informed me. "I have always been free from all prejudices of rank, and never could approve of it in your father," she added; "but

the experience that I have had with this girl has taught me a lesson, which serves as a justification of his ideas. I am compelled to believe, against my will, that extraction, or as it is called, blood, influences a person's development, his actions and thoughts; that certain conditions are born in him, against which all training is powerless. Eugenie, as the matron of the asylum from which we took her, wrote me, comes from the lowest class; her father took his own life, just as he was about to be arrested for some offense, and her mother abandoned her child because she could not provide for it. I was truly delighted to see the girl promise to be so talented, sweet, and good; but from the time when she began to think for herself, it seemed to me as if she returned to the law of nature from which she sprang, as if the wild shoots came from her as from an artificially perfected plant, which it would cost us more care and trouble to suppress than our position in society would allow of. Besides, you see, it pains her if I treat her according to her station; it is better that we spare ourselves ill-will and ingratitude, which I see already arising."

I could have made hundreds of excuses for the girl, but my mother's reasons were sacred to me—and the confidence with which she spoke, prevented all remonstrance. I gave in to her better judgment, although it was a great trial to me.

My heart ached as the time drew near for Eugenie to leave us.

When I asked her what she intended doing, she gave me an evasive answer; still, it was evident that she took pains during the last week of her stay to show the deepest gratitude, from which could be seen at times bitterness and the consciousness of an injustice, which

were in some measure mitigated, when she saw how I exerted myself to convince her of my sorrow at this unexpected separation.

As Eugenie bade my mother farewell, kissed her hand, and turned from her with suppressed sobs, the latter's austerity seemed to relax.

I saw that she was inclined to bid Eugenie stay. However, she quickly controlled herself, pressed her hand, said a few kind words to her, then turned away and entered her boudoir.

Then Eugenie did not try to restrain her sobs. Indifferent to the proprieties, which had once been so sacred to her, she threw herself on my breast, weeping bitterly, then rushed out and hurried into the cab which awaited her outside.

As I approached to bid her adieu once more, my eyes filled with tears, hers were tearless. Her features were cold and set.

She had summoned up all her pride in order to leave us, apparently, of her own free will.

Either she did not see my mother standing at the window, or pretended not to; the carriage rolled away, and with it went a piece of my heart.

I felt very lonesome. When I entered the house, I threw myself down in a corner and wept.

Already at noon my mother had a surprise for me. Marie von Muhlberg, the daughter of a deceased royal official, who had left his family a small sum of money which had been confiscated by the crown, appeared at our table. Her father had been seized with apoplexy upon finding that some thousands of dollars were missing from the treasury; and, as the sum was lacking after his death, all that his family had to depend upon was taken from them.

Marie lived in our neighborhood. She embroidered for us and for several other families, in order to support herself and her mother. My mother, when Eugenie asked leave to go, proposed that Marie should come as my companion, for which service her mother should receive sufficient annually to make her comfortable.

This young girl, who was about my age, had interested me some time. Whenever she came to see us, I insisted upon her staying, and was so friendly toward her, that Eugenie would jealously turn up her nose.

She was so aristocratic in her manner, and so refined, that my mother thought it indelicate to hand Marie the money when she brought home her work, and would send it to her by a maid, with a few polite lines and a little extra pay.

Marie was about my size—she was as slender as a palm—her waist could be easily spanned; her hair was a shade darker than mine.

Her light brown eyes were very bright, their expression was gentle, and her lashes long and dark. About her mouth there played a charming smile; her movements were graceful and easy.

Her dress was chosen with good taste, notwithstanding her poverty; one could see that it had been well taken care of, yet it would have required a critical, feminine eye to find any fault with it.

But what was the most noticeable about her, and what she did not take any pains to hide, were the scars made by her daily struggle for bread, the scars from the use of the needle on her fingers, on those beautifully-formed hands; whosoever saw those scars could guess why her large, almond-shaped eyes were slightly inflamed.

I had known a long time that she sat up nights, in

order to support herself and her poor mother by her toilsome and poorly-paid work.

How often, when returning home at midnight, had I seen a light in her window. She was sitting up to work so that she might earn a few crowns more, and spoil her lovely eyes in order that her mother, who had been so sorely tried, might not suffer.

As she sat opposite me that day at the table, my eyes involuntarily rested on the marks on her fingers. I took myself to task, still I could not help seeing them.

Marie noticed it, but no warrior ever bore his scars more bravely than did she hers. As she met my eyes, she looked at me so good-naturedly, so modestly, and so calmly, not at all reproachfully, not even the least bit vexed, that I felt as if I must beg her pardon.

In the afternoon, on the first opportunity that offered, I took her hand and pressed it between both of mine. I think she understood me.

My mother knew of the interest I took in this charming girl, whose sphere should have been the salon, not the garret; she knew that I always admired womanly beauty without envy, that in company I was apt to forget the effect of my appearance in the admiration of others.

I was faithless enough toward my old friend, who had just departed, to forget her almost entirely in the joy of having Marie with me. It was partly Eugenie's own fault, for she herself had taught me to forget her former merry moods; for latterly she had been quite changed, and though during the first few days of my intercourse with Marie I missed Eugenie's special peculiarities and habits, her quick, variable temper, still the gentle ways of my new friend suited me so well, that

it really seemed to me at times as if she were more fitted for my companion.

Yet I thought kindly of Eugenie, perhaps more so because my mother never mentioned her, and purposely avoided bringing her name into our conversations.

What words can describe our astonishment when, several weeks later, we learned that Eugenie had returned to the castle! My mother said not a word when she heard this news. On the contrary, she pressed her lips tightly together; her face betrayed the deepest indignation, and she withdrew shortly after to her room.

Of course, I was very much excited. Eugenie again at the castle, that same castle where my brother was said to entertain such questionable characters,—Eugenie at my brother's castle, where she had only been saved from his evil designs by my mother's timely interference!

It was all so inexplicable, so enigmatical to me, that I would have given anything to have obtained even the faintest clue.

How gladly would I have consulted with my mother, but I did not dare to, for there must be something at the bottom of it, which ——

Yes, in that “which” lay the problem, which later would be solved!

CHAPTER VIII.

A maiden's first entry into society is like the life of a dragon-fly—shimmering and glistening in the sunshine, borne along by the breath of flattery, breathing in the perfume of flowers; her life is like a cloudless summer's day, whose horizon is adorned with golden-crowned air-castles and fictitious *fata morgana*.

When my father died I had just made my *début*. Until then I had seen the world with a child's innocent eyes; upon his death I left this magical world for a time.

We lived very retired until our sorrow was somewhat assuaged. After that I was out in the world again, but it was to me as a diorama, in which I took no part. Our visits to the baths and different cities, our travels in Italy, were varied, but I took no interest in it all, until the time came when we felt compelled, out of consideration for ourselves, to re-enter the society to which we belonged. The king himself desired our presence. I confess, I felt the need of again mingling with people; though it was not a vain desire to create a "*furore*," or play a part, yet I longed for some of the pleasures of life, for diversion, for friendship.

This new world seemed different to me from that at the castle; if it was enlivened by the same element, there was wanting that happy unrestraint which we enjoyed; there was more ceremony. The people were automaton, directed by the master of ceremonies; and when we were invited to court, it always seemed to me as if I did not dare to breathe freely, as if I had to gauge my steps and my movements by some pattern.

Finally I grew accustomed to this etiquette, and if at first the general admiration that I received occasioned a certain degree of nervousness, it later made me conscious of my power.

The king and the princes paid me attention; the latter were very stupid, and the ladies, who aspired to their favor, I found even more so.

It would have been a breach of etiquette to express my opinion, so I kept it to myself. I did not even dare to tell my mother, for she seemed proud of her daughter's triumphs. My mother had aged considerably; she was

no longer young, though she was still a handsome and clever woman. Other interests often occupied her mind, the years had probably brought with them a different view of things.

But what troubled me was, that I could not take Marie into our circle. Although my mother was always affable to her, still she kept her in her place; not because she herself tried to overstep the bounds, but because I tried to put her forward as my equal.

So Marie had to listen to descriptions of balls and soirées which she did with heavenly patience and without any envy. Of course, my admirers, of whom there was a host, were included in my category.

There was the eldest prince's Court Marshal, Monsieur de Chevreux, still a young man.

He was handsome, gallant, a trifle corpulent, refined in his manners, but so "sublime" in his conversation, in his movements, in his smile, in his carriage, that I always felt as if he did not belong to this world, as if he had no prosaic intercourse with it.

Chevreux was from a French family; his grandparents having come to Germany during the first Napoleonic epoch. Mindful of this origin everything about him was French *chic*.

They said that he regularly received whole cases of perfumeries and cosmetics, of cambric, silk, gloves, etc., from Paris, and that he prided himself upon having the "primeur" of everything new.

His friends said of him that he did not smoke, did not drink, had no evil passions, that his whole life, the air he breathed was fragrant, refined, full of *chic* and *bon-ton*.

It was said that every morning he would spend hours in his "laboratorium;" that is, in the apartments in which he kept his perfumes and odors arranged according

to the rules of art and science; these rooms were said to be a perfect wonder of "extracts" and "sucs" from all the most celebrated manufactories, from all the flowers and blossoms in the world.

One could make him miserable by telling him of some scent which he did not possess, for in his collection there were to be found all the rarest perfumes and cosmetics of the Orient and Indies; and if he read in any book of any perfume which a traveler had smelt in a Nabob's, a Sahib's, or the Mikado's palace, Chevreux would set his agents in London, Calcutta, or wherever they were, to hunt for it.

His friends often played tricks on him on that account—when an illustrious person came to court they put a flea in poor Chevreux's ear by means of this visitor.

He was to begin a conversation about the rose gardens of Sharon, or some such thing, and then mention some odor that had never been made.

Chevreux would listen in feverish excitement. As soon as an opportunity afforded, he would draw the speaker aside, have the perfume described exactly, and would then spend innumerable sleepless nights, until he finally would find out that no such scent existed. This happened so often that Chevreux at last discovered the joke, and was on his guard.

There was nothing more natural than that he should experiment in his "laboratory," and use the products of his skill upon his own person.

So he bore the entire *fleur* of his chemistry upon his face, a costly enameled butterfly, and when, at different times, he selected the choicest perfumes from his laboratory, his appearance in the large saloon of the king's or the prince's palace, had the effect of a drop of the ottar of roses, which shed its perfume round about.

"One can smell him a mile away," the king used to say, and one of the ladies, whose nerves were weak, could at first not help fainting if Chevreux was within a hundred feet of her, until she succeeded with the assistance of a chemist in finding an "antidote," which she would sprinkle upon her handkerchief at the dangerous moment, in order to purify the atmosphere.

It would be unjust to say that Chevreux, in spite of this weakness, could not be agreeable, for he was so often, when he was natural. He read a great deal; he was very skillful in many provinces, probably in consequence of his chemical studies. He had a fine memory, which never failed him; therefore he served his prince as an indispensable oracle. He was accommodating, pleasant, and even self-sacrificing if he could in any way help anyone; his gallantry only was unbearable, sweet and stupefying like his perfumes, and upon the young ladies at court, his conversation, in conjunction with his odors, had the effect of a sleeping potion.

It goes without saying that the Marquis de Chevreux was the court fashion-plate for all the gentlemen; his close connection with Paris and London pressed upon him a number of commissions, which he had attended to in both places.

Chevreux was not wealthy. He was said to have sufficient to satisfy his own pleasures. It was reported that he had debts, but they never seemed to oppress him.

I, just I, had the misfortune to inspire this man with a passion which, it was said, led him, through absent-mindedness, to commit grave mistakes in his laboratory. As he visited us very frequently, I was obliged to ask him not to use any perfumery when he came, for it made my head ache.

Chevreux yielded to my request. But we heard that

when he returned home he plunged into an ocean of scents.

My mother liked him because he was the best informed of all the gentlement at court. I foresaw that some day he would speak to my mother, and that I should reject him, for I would rather die than become "La Marquise de Pozzioli"—for he had been so nicknamed in town.

The marquis' greatest bugbear was Lieutenant von Langenbach, who also was paying me attention; a very handsome man, not as "pretty" as the marquis, nor as well-informed, but refined, clever, energetic, a good dancer, following all the grand passions, and always surrounded by those invisible spirits, which whispered in the ladies' ears about him.

Langenbach was the son of poor, or, rather, not wealthy parents; he had been a cavalry officer, had gained favor, and become the youngest prince's adjutant, as such had made himself a necessity at court, as an excellent dancer, as manager of private theatricals, tableaux, and so forth. He had gained such a hold at court, that he was very influential; he knew how to keep the favor of the older ladies, who raved about him as the personification of amiability.

Although I did not undertake to gainsay that recognition of his good qualities which others awarded him, he had something about him, which in my eyes resembled an adventurer.

All seemed to wish to make clear to me with a purpose, whose aim I saw through, that Langenbach was the abstract of all manly perfection, that his military career was so promising; but my instinct directed me, and whenever he came to us, I felt chilled and uneasy.

Langenbach had indeed one great virtue; he was as fine a narrator as one could wish to hear. When quite

young, he had obtained leave of absence for several years, and entered the North American army, then went to Brazil, had been with the unfortunate Emperor in Mexico, and when he related his experiences, one listened to him with delight; even I forgot the reserve which I always exercised when the man was near me, listened attentively, and took a secret delight when Chevreux was present, in watching his jealousy at Langenbach's success.

But when the latter was gone, and I thought it all over, cold chills ran through me, for his looks, more than his words, told me that the plans which he had formed, threatened my peace, my happiness.

His manner toward my mother convinced me. I saw that he took particular pains to make the most favorable impression upon her. I noticed with anxiety how well he succeeded, and finally concluded that it would be necessary to work against his plans.

Too long had I relied upon my mother's penetration. It is incomprehensible to me, though it often happens that women with the clearest, quickest judgment, when they advance in years, allow that gift to be biased by trivial influences; that they, accustomed as they always have been to judge correctly, will side with what once did not seem upright to them.

My mother was still a comparatively young woman, and perhaps was more alive to the honor which the interesting Langenbach showed her; perhaps she preferred him because in our circle Langenbach distinguished himself in his conversation by a certain originality and simplicity; while Chevreux distributed the fruits of his scientific education and his extensive reading almost always in an offensively perfumed *bonbonnière*.

Besides there was a sympathetic point of contact be-

tween my mother and Langenbach—my brother, Hermann—Langenbach had accompanied the prince to Paris as aide-de-camp.

There he had met my brother, who for some time had been leading a life *grand train* in Paris, and was much talked about in the clubs, on the Bois, and in society.

The prince, when he returned, spoke enthusiastically of my brother, whom he had invited to the Residence. I gathered that Hermann had paid the prince great attention and had impressed him as a cavalier of the first water.

The prince's intelligence was limited.

Hermann had impressed him. Langenbach seemed to have become very intimate with him, and that gave me the key to his character. I watched him attentively as he told my mother about her son. Was it done with the object of gaining her sympathy, or was it congeniality? I think it was both.

For the first time my mother heard her son praised, both by the prince and by Langenbach, and to her, who had given him up as lost, it was truly gratifying.

It had caused her pain to give up her son; the opportunity was only needed to awaken her maternal love in all its strength.

Since the prince and Langenbach had spoken in Hermann's favor, my mother felt more charitable toward him.

She thought she saw in her son the same energy that his father had possessed, but her son had not had the right kind of government at the age when it should have been developed, and which he was probably now trying to strengthen. From her words I soon decided that she reproached herself for being too strict, and that she longed for a meeting with her son, whom she missed. I could

not explain to myself why the acquaintance, or rather the friendship, between my brother and Langenbach, should make me uneasy.

I anticipated nothing good from it.

Langenbach spoke with enthusiasm of the prospect of having my brother with us so soon; but my heart beat anxiously. I tried to make excuses for Hermann's brusque, reckless, and imperious ways, tried to think that, since our separation, he had grown more manly and considerate, but that he had changed, or become better, seemed to me impossible.

I knew by myself how unlikely the heart was to be influenced by artificial, social currents.

Chevreux and Langenbach wearied me with their attentions. I felt a kind of satisfaction when, tired of the former's sweet words, I could turn to the at least more manly and interesting galantry of the latter; however, they both annoyed me, and I could not escape from them altogether.

Upon one of our first appearances at the Residence, at a court soirée, I met a young man on whom I seemed to make no impression. He chanced to be one of the first whose acquaintance we made, but he took very little notice of me, or rather, he seemed purposely to treat both my mother and me coolly.

While other gentlemen, who were introduced to us, gathered about us, and especially favored me, he avoided us whenever he could, without being rude.

The mind of a young girl, before she mingles with the world, always forms its ideal man. This ideal takes shape in her imagination; she pictures his features, she sees him before her, she thinks she recognizes him in people she meets, but soon finds out that it is not yet he, that his speech, manner, and person do not correspond with her

ideal, if his features are very like those she has portrayed in her mind.

So I bore an ideal about with me, which had almost died out, which was scarcely recognizable, and which I only thought of when I compared the men, who paid me attention, with the image which I bore in my heart.

About a year before our departure from the castle, I met a young man one day in a neighboring town, which I had often visited with my mother, and that young man in a passing moment had made a lasting impression upon me.

I never made his acquaintance, and had almost forgotten his personal appearance, still his features were engraven on my memory, and, as I said before, if any one of our cavaliers took pains to please me, that ideal arose, and he lost the game.

This often seemed childish and silly to me, but I could not help it.

At that soirée, fate ordained that Baron von Radom, attaché of the —— embassy, who was one of the first introduced to us, should bear a close resemblance to my ideal, that his form, his bearing, yes, his whole person should agree with it.

It could not be the same young man whom I had met before, for he, as I could perceive at that meeting, would move in a totally different and lower sphere. The scene of that rencontre was a small, provincial town, while Radom until now had been an attaché in Paris and Madrid—nevertheless, he was very like my ideal, and that sufficed for me to treat him kindly when we first met, although he plainly showed that he did not attach any value to my treatment of him.

Radom, with his slender, elegant figure, his pale complexion, his grave manner, with a voice which was very

sympathetic, obliging, and debonnair, paid all the ladies that evening the greatest attention, which was so much the more noticeable, because it betrayed no vain or selfish purpose, and was only in accordance with the laws and forms of society. That wounded my vanity!

Radom, I told myself, was, notwithstanding the preference I entertained for him, nothing to me; I almost persuaded myself that on close examination his face was a very common one, that at first I had been mistaken in it. I scorned the idea that it was possible to take this man as an ideal, when there were others much handsomer, more agreeable, and more intelligent; I even made fun of him once, as with Eugenie—who was then with us—I met him on the promenade, and was vexed because she thought his face *distingué*.

The other ladies were of the same opinion, much to my disgust. Who was this proud, reserved man? I asked myself.

They said he was the adopted son of a wealthy Baron von Radom, who at his death left him his entire fortune. But the will was disputed by his legitimate heirs, and he was only given a small portion.

The ladies asserted that he was an accomplished conversationalist, but he had given me no proof of it; for with me he was stiff, moody, ill at ease, and reserved.

I came to the conclusion, finally, that I was absurd about my "Ideal."

Could not Providence just as well have given to a beggar, or a scapegrace, the features which existed in my imagination?

What is Ideal? I asked myself. A whim, a caprice, which takes possession of the head and heart, and leaves room for nothing else, until experience drives it out.

A girl's ideal, I told myself, is nothing but a myth,

which can not exist in the real world; therefore, I was as distant to Radom as it pleased him to be to me.

As luck would have it, we did not meet again for a long time. Only through the papers did my mother learn that Radom had gone on a diplomatic mission to Paris, and would not return to his post for months—for she had not taken much notice of him, because he avoided us.

I was satisfied.

He might have been sent to China or Japan for my part, the farther, the better; for his cold civility in the presence of others irritated me, it was looked upon as resistance to my charms, and that was a defeat for me, who had become the center of attraction.

Besides the rumor was afloat, that Radom had asked to be transferred to another embassy, which no one could understand, as he had been well treated at our court.

His wishes had been met half-way, for he was allowed to make a change for a short time.

Fate, however, intended that he should return.

CHAPTER IX.

Autumn was over.

In the garden about our villa, a frosty wind was shaking the dead, discolored leaves and the rain-drops from the branches.

The fallen leaves presented a sombre contrast to the evergreen—amongst the foliage could occasionally be seen a floweret; here and there a rose-bud peeped forth from the bushes about the summer-house; the wild-vine was brilliant in its gay, autumnal dress; but even the

luscious grapes upon the walls, the little primroses, which blossomed at the foot of our veranda, were unable to revive dying nature.

We had spent the latter part of the summer at a South-German watering-place; had lived there quietly and comfortably, and held very little intercourse with the other families there.

My mother went there for bracing air, to convalesce from an illness which had repeatedly troubled her, and which the doctors considered serious.

She now felt better, still she was troubled about her condition. Her temper was variable, often almost trying; illness had a material effect upon her frame of mind.

I was melancholy, very often miserable.

Marie's health, too, had been undermined by long years of overwork; the sacrifices she had made, had been too much for her; those sleepless nights spent in toil had completely ruined her powers, just at a time when they were striving for their natural development.

She, of course, would not confess it. She smiled when I spoke to her about it, when I besought her to consult a physician, and purposely pretended to be stronger than she was.

But the greatest misfortune was, that Marie was suffering from a heart trouble, a love affair, for which no doctor could prescribe, and which she so anxiously concealed, although it had happened before she came to live with us and though she seemed to us so naïve and free.

The noble, patient, self-sacrificing creature knew only two duties, one toward me, and the other toward her mother. The one, she fulfilled with painful resignation, in order to be able to supply her mother abundantly, and

though she did not seem to desire any happiness for herself, she felt the misery of a passion which threatened to entirely destroy her.

Marie, whom I had never seen anything but pale, gradually showed signs of inward suffering, without allowing it to have the least effect upon her work. As often as I begged her to be frank with me, she only smiled, looked at me with her clear eyes, shook her head, and maintained it was only a passing indisposition, which was not worth noticing.

I knew better, for our family physician had repeatedly looked searchingly at her. I was destined to have trouble with my protégées. Although I was pleased to have Marie with us, I soon could not conceal from myself that the condition of her mind was preparing trouble for me.

When we returned from our vacation a confidential servant of ours arrived, to whom my mother, when we left the castle, had entrusted the management of her wardrobe and household goods. I suspected, I was convinced that she knew something about Eugenie's fate, and, by persuasion, I succeeded in obtaining a confession from her.

Poor, unhappy creature ! What I feared was only a suspicion of the truth, as I concluded from the woman's story.

My brother—who found the time hang heavy on his hands at the castle, and could only find amusement in the company of his dissipated friends—my brother, scarcely matured, with his low standard of the worth and social rights of women, saw in the patient, modest, and forbearing Eugenie, a plaything. He knew that she could not be vexed with him; that she had always forgiven him when he wounded her—a forgiveness to which,

however, he attached no importance. He, in whose eyes a woman was only a woman and a slave, a miserable creature, when he became lord of the manor, had found Eugenie passably pretty; she was young, piquante, fresh and lively; he, accustomed to the admiration of women, soon perceived that Eugenie, who had taken everything from him as a boy, looked up to him as a man with secret, silent adoration.

Accidentally, of course, they met in the woods. He probably made himself very agreeable at these meetings, and she, who had always trembled before him, was caught by his gentle, pleasant manner. Very likely they often met there.

I remember well that Eugenie, siding with my brother against me, once said that he could be very agreeable if he only wanted to be. At that time I paid no attention to what she said. What could I imagine but that Hermann in a fit of passing good nature had spoken kindly to her, and that such kindness she rated very high.

Eugenie loved my brother; she threw herself into his arms. When he wearied of her, he told her one day at a meeting in the woods, that he had a splendid idea; she should marry the young school-master, who would be a first-rate match for her.

She had refused; Hermann finally declared that it was his decision, his will, which she was to obey; if she did not consent on the spot, he would fasten her to a tree near by and let her starve.

This was one of the common bubble-overs of his brutality, and was not surprising.

As Eugenie resolutely refused, he whistled for his groom, and ordered him to bind the "refractory hussy" to a tree. The groom had told that later in confidence.

Trembling, weeping, with a beseeching glance at the

unmerciful man, Eugenie allowed him to bind her, and Hermann departed with a laugh.

I can remember that on that day he had no thoughts of repentance, no feeling of compassion, for I saw him toward evening in the court-yard, examining several horses, and chatting and joking with his head-groom.

My brother showed his cruelty in that stormy scene with my mother. His will should be obeyed, and when he saw that it was to be thwarted, he ordered Eugenie hunted from the court by hounds.

The unhappy girl sought refuge in the lake. What at that time was incomprehensible, now became plain, namely: that she wanted death and not my mother's protection!

Had she only found it!

Eugenie could not be saved; I believe to-day that my mother knew more about the cause of the change in Eugenie than I. Either her sharp sight discovered it, or she had been privately advised of many things after we left the castle.

When Eugenie left us, she had gone directly to the castle. But fresh humiliation awaited her there.

She secretly trembled when she thought of what her reception might be.

But my brother received her very civilly; she had come opportunely.

Hermann needed a French maid for the Parisian adventuresses, whom he had invited to visit him, and though she was treated contemptuously, and was evidently indifferent to the comments of the servants, who put their own constructions on her return, for the sake of being near him, she, who until now had been the companion of the Countess von M., and treated as a member of the family, submitted to play the degrading rôle of serving

these women, of helping them with their toilets, of witnessing their wildest saturnals—her heart often ached at the sight of Hermann's excesses, for he laughed coarsely when his friends attempted to caress her, and called her a "silly goose" if she did not suffer them, or threatened her with the "school-master," from whom, he said, she could not escape anyway, for he had pledged his word, and paid him the money for her dowry.

According to Hermann's opinion, which he had expressed several times, she was a governess who had been led to believe herself something better, by his mother's foolish kindness and consideration; he was a school-master; they were just made for one another, and Satan himself should not prevent him making the couple one. And my brother carried out his atrocious intention.

When autumn had advanced, Hermann decided to prepare an Oriental fête for his guests, before they and he departed.

He spent thousands upon thousands in order to convert the castle, the court, the park, and lake, into a scene from the "Arabian Nights."

He ordered in town magnificent costumes for his guests; the small flotilla on the lake served as a Turkish *kaik*, the whole decorated with palms, orange trees, and costly plants, lighted by electricity, and a tournament arranged between the Saracens and the Crusaders.

Following the Oriental custom, he decided to have a marriage solemnized at this festival.

Before he announced this surprise to his guests, he had Eugenie imprisoned in her room and guarded, without her suspecting what was about to happen or what this imprisonment meant.

From her window she saw part of the festal arrangements. Trembling like a lamb about to be led to the

sacrifice, she saw the festivities begin, heard the tumult, the strains of music, and the cannon-shots. In the afternoon, she saw the horses for the tournament, and the servants in their Oriental dress, coming from the stables, and—— at that moment they entered to array her in wedding garments, without telling her what was to take place, as they thought she knew.

More dead than alive, Eugenie, this time defenseless, as she had chosen to be, was dragged forth to the chapel.

There all the guests, half intoxicated with pleasure and wine, were assembled. The bride was received with loud acclamation, the groom's stupid face was made an object of sport.

Eugenie was nerveless and almost unconscious. Deathly pale, so said the housekeeper, who had witnessed the revolting ceremony from a corner of the chapel, Eugenie was led to the altar, and only when the priest stepped out of the sacristy did quiet reign.

This time Hermann accomplished his knavery unhindered, even the servants did not pity the unfortunate girl, who had brought this upon herself.

The next day, as Eugenie lay at the point of death in the wildest delirium, in the modest little house of the husband she had been forced to marry, the guests at the castle departed, and Hermann, after sleeping off his drunkenness, began his journey to France, without deigning to give his victim a pitying thought, for the recollection of her had vanished with the last tone of the festal music.

Indeed, if he ever thought of her again, it was undoubtedly with the conviction that he had provided magnanimously for the girl.

CHAPTER X.

Hermann was now expected at the Residence for the winter. The prince, as well as Langenbach, took pains to prepare the court for the arrival of a cavalier of whose accomplishments they could not speak too highly.

I dreaded his arrival.

To be sure, I often said to myself, when I heard these two gentlemen speak of my brother, that he had probably been improved by his travels and his intercourse with the world; he had no doubt given in to the demands of the proprieties and laid aside or moderated his imperious, abrupt and reckless ways, and was, at least to all appearances, gentler and more pleasing, for I dared not hope that his character, that the principles which had been instilled in him by his training, had changed one iota from what they had been. My mother felt differently.

She longed for her son. Although since they had parted, he had not favored his mother with a letter; still, in all probability, just that increased her yearning for him. Hermann was her only, her proud and gallant son, of whose personal successes in the gay world she had heard so much, and she often reproached herself for having left him, and took the greater part of the blame upon herself. Had not Eugenie caused their separation, and was he to blame for all that had happened since?

She felt that she must look upon everything in a more liberal light !

Had not Hermann acted just as his father would have done? It was true, his father, who now seemed to her transformed into a god, had been gentler, he had dis-

played more honesty in his principles; but that was just the difference between them; my father, whose memory I cherished just as dearly, had never failed to make amends, if he had been rude and severe; he often did so, when he was convinced he was in the right; he held his own opinions, but he did not wish to injure others, if it could be avoided. Hermann, on the contrary, unmercifully sacrificed everyone to that pride which his station justified, and trampled pitilessly upon his victims. Were these victims worthy of anything better? Thus questioned my mother after the separation from her son, and she frequently talked to me on the subject.

I loved my father; but I knew too little about his faults to judge him. I could have loved my brother had he not always stifled my feelings. I feared him, and liked him better at a distance; a certain anxiety crept over me, when I thought that he would break in upon our cosy domesticity—like an icy whirlwind.

He felt no brotherly love for me; he had no sympathetic feelings; and that affection which unites families so closely, he called "foolish sentimentality."

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In the meantime the court had returned; the saloons of the aristocracy were again opened.

Marquis de Chevreux had grown melancholy. When we were at the sea-side, he had paid us a visit, and had taken the opportunity to declare his love for me confidentially to my mother, and to ask her what he had to expect.

The answer was given very carefully.

Chevreux was inconsolable.

Lieutenant von Langenbach probably heard of this through Chevreux's own thoughtlessness. When we returned to the Residence, everyone knew of it, and

Langenbach related derisively how the poor Marshal, driven to despair, had sought death in a bath of costly essences, from which he had been rescued by some person unknown.

Langenbach very likely counted on more hope for himself. His manner, when he called upon us, was more assured and conscious.

I read in his eyes something like confidence, yes triumph even, and his actions led me to believe that he was only awaiting my brother's arrival, to be quite sure of me.

Fear was the right word, Lieutenant von Langenbach inspired me with fear! His eyes seemed ever watchful; sincerity was not in him; nothing good or noble could exist in his heart, and it was surely not prejudice to consider him a cold, calculating, selfish person, who, fascinated by his gift of conversation, by his social powers, speculated upon them to make his fortune.

It was absurd of him to take me for the object of those speculations, and it gave me no high opinion of his cleverness, for at the Residence there was no lack of wealthy girls, who would gladly have given their hands to such an elegant and popular officer.

Indeed there were many who raved about him, and many hoped with throbbing hearts that he would propose to them, if it pleased his fancy to select certain ones at a ball, or to repeatedly call upon them.

Many had felt highly insulted if he suddenly neglected them in order to pay attention to another; but they would smile upon him just the same if he again took a fancy to notice them, perhaps because their *toilette* upon a certain evening especially pleased him, or because he wanted to make someone else jealous, or because he wished to do so without any reason.

His triumphs were much too easy on account of the susceptibility of our young girls. Therefore I determined to prove an exception, and to show him how little value I set upon his attentions.

Indeed it annoyed me to receive the homage which he had paid to so many others; and I used every opportunity in order to escape it, as he had seemed bent, since the beginning of the season, upon selecting me as his special divinity.

One of the first court-fêtes was to be the celebration of Princess Henrietta's birthday.

There was to be an address, and afterward a farce was to be given upon an unprovoked stage in the palace.

The queen herself had undertaken the distribution of the characters.

Lieutenant von Langenbach was to be the manager, and also to play a part.

To my annoyance, I learnt through Langenbach that the queen had assigned to me the part of leading lady, because the previous winter I had distinguished myself as an amateur! To Eugenie's theatrical gift, and to her love of elocution, did I probably owe the awakening of my very unimportant talent.

To my annoyance, said I, for I learnt at the same time that Baron von Radom, who had returned to his post several weeks before, was to be my lover.

I was to be thrown, not only at the representation, but at all the rehearsals, with him, who, had it not been ungentlemanly, would always have turned his back upon me.

How came the queen to make such a choice!

Langenbach seemed much pleased with the arrangement. He praised Radom's talent, only regretted that that part had not fallen to him, while I was convinced that he only said so to mislead me.

I did not have to consider long to find out that the arrangement of affairs was not unknown to Langenbach. For his own interests he had advised the queen to give the part of lover to Baron von Radom, because he knew that the latter did not care for me, and it would otherwise have fallen to one of his comrades, who was trying to cut him out, and whose courtesy I gladly accepted if it freed me from Langenbach's marked attentions.

In vain I sought for a pretext to enable me to withdraw from the farce; I dared not vex the queen. But great was my chagrin when I read the manuscript, and found that I had to say things to my lover, which I should never be able to utter to his face; that I should have to give him a long, loving glance, and allow him to kiss my hand twice!

But that was not all! I should have to describe the success of my love to a friend, and confess to her that this man was the ideal of my maiden dreams!

Never! I threw down the book indignantly, and sprang up. Had it not been written by a popular comedy-writer, I should have looked upon it as a satire upon myself! What would Radom think, if, when standing behind the scenes, he heard me utter such nonsense!

Just that comforted me. He, yes all, who knew that Radom had scarcely noticed me, that he only had not admired me—would discover the irony, and understand how it was that I could say such things upon the stage, about this man especially, with so little embarrassment.

And again; I could introduce into my voice and manner that which would emphasize the irony: I could unintentionally take my revenge for Radom's indifference; and though it might annoy him to be obliged to say sweet things to me and kiss my hand twice, it was not likely

that he, as a gentleman, would betray anything in his speech or acting, which would sound like sarcasm.

And if he should do so? . . .

Impossible! He could not anger the queen, who had given him this rôle, and what I, as a lady, could within certain limits do, he did not dare.

What if he should refuse to act? That was not at all probable, unless chance should present a sufficient excuse to justify his refusing.

I decided to undertake my part. I would create a furor; no one should know that I wished to humiliate Radom, but himself.

Langenbach had unconsciously given me the opportunity for a glorious revenge. I had not seen Radom since the preceding winter, should meet him for the first time at rehearsal, and for this meeting I should equip myself with all my presence of mind.

I eagerly began to study my rôle, in order to know it well, and through it to govern myself. Poor Marie had daily to play the prompter, until I had impressed every word upon my memory; I went to the first rehearsal without knowing if Radom would take part, for I did not wish to ask about it beforehand.

CHAPTER XI.

Not without a purpose did I arrive later than the others in the drawing-room of the royal palace, in which we were to rehearse.

They were awaiting me impatiently.

I glanced carelessly at those present, who were standing about in groups.

Radom, standing alone at one of the windows, was gazing absently at a fresco. He seemed paler than usual, that is, as far as I, who had never noticed him very much, could tell!

Perhaps I only thought so, because I wanted to.

They met me with reproaches, they declared they had forgotten their parts, which they had studied so hard that morning.

Langenbach forthwith assumed his managerial air, said there was no time to be lost, that we should begin at once.

Radom stepped into the saloon and made me a very respectful, but distant, bow.

The first rehearsal was a failure, much to Lieutenant von Langenbach's despair. The other ladies had learnt nothing, I alone knew my part. Radom was very distant; he pleaded a headache, busied himself with the manuscript in his hand, avoided looking at me, and read those parts of the dialogue, for which I had especially prepared myself, dryly, without expression, and so indifferently that the entire point of the piece was lost. Langenbach had not wanted any books used even at the first rehearsal, and reproved Radom several times, of which he took no notice.

I guessed Radom's object.

He wished the others to become used to those passages, so that the difference between them and his usual manner toward me should not strike them.

He wisely calculated that otherwise these people would prepare the audience for a surprise on the fête night.

During rehearsal I could not help examining Radom's person more attentively than I had ever done before. His countenance, his features were refined and aristo-

cratic, combined with something which made them sympathetic, so much so that they conquered even my dislike, which he so richly deserved.

His dark-gray, sensitive eyes flashed brightly, even when his features were in repose; about his mouth hovered an expression which made one feel that nothing insipid or common-place could pass those lips.

He was paler than the other gentlemen, but his paleness betrayed the highest mental activity, and his movements, his bearing corresponded with the laws of the beautiful.

I could not be angry with this man, yet I desired to be, ought to be! Perhaps once I made a silly, childish mistake, when I, as he was obliged to pay me some attention, put on a supercilious air, which frightened even myself, and which I had often criticised in others.

Radom noticed this, his features twitched slightly, but he collected himself and answered me with a gravely gallant gesture, whose meaning I understood and therefore felt doubly.

Radom did not vouchsafe me another glance, and it seemed to me as if the composure, which he exhibited, was unnatural. I was convinced of it, as, after rehearsal, I received Langenbach's compliments, and walked up and down the room talking merrily, his eyes rested long and fixedly upon me, and he shrank back as I looked in his direction.

At home I laughed at the imprudent diplomatist, who had laid aside his mask, when he thought he was unnoticed. But I soon grew grave, as it was my custom to be. At the same time I felt very much disturbed and nervous. Only when I had seen my mother and Marie, told them about the rehearsal, and again sought the solitude of my chamber, did I gain my usual composure,

and then it seemed to me that it was a pity that just this man should act so strangely toward me.

I could have been friendly with him, for I liked everything about him, even his unfriendliness; and I now discovered for the first time, what had so strangely affected me during rehearsal — it was Radom's voice, which touched the heart.

"It is incomprehensible what power the voice of another can exercise over us!" said I to myself. "It was only his voice which kept me from treating him proudly and scornfully. Surely it was his voice, for it is only incidental that he bears such a striking resemblance to the young man whom I met in that little town! I was certain long ago that it was silly for me to carry about that young man's image as my ideal. Radom would please any girl, but that I did not dislike him as he deserved to be."——

Was it worth my while to think of him? A girl of my age detests every man who is purposely indifferent to her. Radom's offence against me consisted in this—that he did not hide his indifference from the world, that he, for a man of sense and good taste, was so absurd as to consider the much-admired Countess von M., unworthy of his notice.

Perhaps to-day, when he was compelled to approach me, he had perceived his mistake; but it was too late, for my pride now forbade my paying any attention to him.

The second rehearsal the next morning was indeed a trial both for him and for me.

Radom again seemed cold, indifferent, perceptibly low-spirited. His eyes, which yesterday had been so bright, were weary. His greeting was constrained and awkward. He tried to avoid my gaze, while I did not consider him worth looking at. Yet I was far from being as composed

as I pretended to be. I could not understand why the sight of this insulting man should disturb me so much. I could not breathe ; I felt as if my uncertainty must be noticeable.

I felt not a spark of interest in him; what I felt was vexation at his presence, and still I mistrusted that this man was dearer to me than any other.

A terrible situation!

Forcibly I freed myself from these thoughts. I found an opportunity unobserved to draw a deep breath, and it seemed to me as if the coat-of-mail upon my bosom burst. My self-control returned, and, in order to make the others forget what they might possibly have noticed, I was very merry.

Langenbach called us to order. As we took our positions in the first scene, I saw Radom cast a long, searching, mistrustful glance at me, and from that moment he was more lively and at ease.

It seemed as if the spell had been broken. I went through the first scene with great sprightliness. Radom, who entered in the second, appeared to be infected by my mood; he entered into the spirit of his rôle. We both thought only of our task; we carried it through with such passion that several chamberlains who were present, loudly applauded.

During that applause I received a shock like that from a stroke of lightning.

Radom had, upon his exit, to kiss my hand. I paid no attention to it until, in the midst of the applause, I felt something hot upon my hand. It was as if I had come in contact with some glowing substance, and the glow mounted to my cheeks, to my brow.

I had now to describe my love to the friend just entering. I was confused; forgot the cue.

Langenbach came to my rescue. Making use of a pause in which I was trying to recall my part, he turned to the audience and very politely begged that they would not interrupt the rehearsal again, for in such cases it was very difficult to remain master of one's rôle.

Radom must have noticed the effect of his boldness. If I had been grateful to Langenbach for assisting me in my confusion, he completely upset me, as he, vexed at the interruption, requested that we repeat the same scene, because it was so closely connected with the next.

At a nod from him Radom stepped quickly forward. His face was flushed; I saw it without really looking at him; I felt it. Langenbach gave him the cue and he began his part. His voice was agitated, and sounded so different from heretofore; so full of feeling, so warm, so tender. The words that the poet put in his mouth must come from his heart, for only the heart was capable of such expression. Unfortunately he had again to make professions which again suffused my face with blushes. It was now high time to save myself from the audience. I saw several of the gentlemen direct their opera-glasses toward me and whisper to one another. They must have noticed my agitation, and that made my heart beat loudly.

The thought of being found out almost stopped the circulation. I felt my face change color.

With the self-control of which in critical moments I was capable, I redoubled the passion of my acting. They should perceive my artistic emulation; I would not be surpassed by Radom.

I succeeded in my purpose. But when Radom again took my hand, as he was about to press a kiss upon it, I purposely held it back, so that his lips might only brush it. At that his hand trembled and mine trembled in his.

Radom, raising himself, ventured to look significantly in my eyes, and his were bright as he stepped to one side.

The confession I had to make to my friend was a total failure. I was embarrassed. Laboriously I got to the end of it, and was glad when I could sink upon a sofa, put my handkerchief to my eyes, and tell one of the gentlemen who approached me anxiously that Lieutenant von Langenbach had asked too much of me; that my ambition had exhausted my strength.

What happened besides I scarcely know. I was very much unnerved. My heart, which would not be quieted, beat uneasily in my breast; I saw and heard Radom and the others declaim; I heard Lieutenant von Langenbach correct them, and have passages repeated. I longed for home and solitude.

The sight of Radom, his presence, made me tremble nervously. I was afraid of him. In that fatal scene which compelled me to lay my hand on Radom's arm, once more to listen to his confessions of love, I was as a person who spoke and acted mechanically, and only when Langenbach complimented me, did I regain the composure to tell him that during rehearsal I had been taken ill, that—I did not know what I said to him, or what I said to the others, who overwhelmed me with flattery.

Arrived in my room, I threw myself into a chair. I put both hands before my face and sobbed.

What must the audience, what must Radom have thought of me! I had behaved foolishly, childishly! I could have died of mortification! I, who had always affirmed that I never felt anything but indifference for that man, for a man who in society had always treated me with the same, I—never would I play that rôle! I would be taken ill; some one else should take my place,

and Radom should be made aware that he was mistaken if he really thought that I was the sport of his April mood! He should see that I was able to punish him for the impertinence with which he had dared to kiss my hand!

If a change had taken place in him, even if he felt that he had done wrong in treating me so, he should not have employed such means to assure me of it.

The next day I racked my brain to find an excuse for not only escaping the last rehearsal, but for dropping out of the whole affair.

I would have to give my mother one, too, and I was not a good hand at inventing.

In order not to anger those at court, my only way out was to plead illness at the time of the rehearsal, and to send word that I should be able to play the evening of the fête without rehearsing.

In the night I started out of my sleep several times. I dreamt that a glowing coal was burning my hand. Another time, Radom stood before me and looked at me so reproachfully that I started back; when I awoke in the morning, I heard his voice so plainly that I looked about me wildly and uttered a cry.

Without seeking an excuse, I was in no condition that morning to go to the palace.

That forenoon I was very restless; I wandered from one room to the other. I was doubly unhappy, for Marie had had one of her attacks, and I was obliged to take her to her room.

The next evening the fête at the prince's palace took place. A ball was to follow the representation, which passed off to the satisfaction of every one.

I was quite myself.

Radom's manner toward me was faultless. I under-

stood that he wished me to forget that he had not always been attentive to me, yet occasionally he was constrained, at times he was absent-minded and hid it with difficulty.

His behavior, although I could find no fault with it, was incomprehensible to me. He was evidently struggling with some feeling which would often gain the mastery over him, and was only kept down by his strong will.

What was it?

Had he provoked me yesterday, and amended it by his conduct; he now aroused my curiosity. He was paler to-day than ever; he was certainly not happy, that made him crotchety and uneven in his temperament.

But why until now had he vented his temper upon me?

One thing I saw, and that reconciled me to him, he felt the necessity of apologizing, if not in words, at least in actions. If yesterday he had forgotten himself, to-day he was most polite, and that sufficed to blot out his error.

Why had he allowed himself to be carried away?

I had promised Langenbach the first dance. He entertained me during the pauses with the representation and the king's desire to have the farce repeated in a few days, when he expected visitors. Unfortunately Radom could not help us, as he had planned a trip of several weeks.

Langenbach noticed that I was astonished at that announcement.

It had indeed surprised me painfully, and that increased my discomposure. Langenbach, who had made a new discovery which vexed him, seemed to wish for revenge.

"They said," he continued, "that Radom's request to be transferred to another embassy would be granted. It

was a pity that the Residence should lose such an agreeable man."

Langenbach had made a mistake in his calculations, and was evidently pleased. I received the communication very indifferently, but was inwardly indignant at the lieutenant's presumptuous manner, and made up my mind to keep him at a distance.

Twice in the course of the evening I was thrown in contact with Radom. Much to my astonishment toward the close of the ball, during a quadrille which I danced with him, our conversation assumed a shade of familiarity.

I forgot that I ought to be angry with him, and he seemed to have entirely forgotten that this was the first ball at which he had approached me.

I knew that this was the first time Radom had danced that night. People were undoubtedly watching us, and that knowledge awoke in both of us the necessity of acting as if we had always been friends.

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Some business relating to my mother's property gave Radom occasion to visit our house.

My mother received him very kindly. It only required half an hour's conversation in order to entirely win her over. She reproached him for having avoided us. Radom's face darkened, but he made some excuse. He took advantage of her invitation, and came frequently. When Langenbach and he met one day, the former's face changed color, and he soon took his leave.

Langenbach had brought us the news that Hermann would arrive in the course of a few days.

This intelligence occasioned my mother much pleasure, still she felt hurt that she had not known it first. Radom was very glum. When my mother asked him if he had

ever met her son in Paris, where he had been upon his last mission, he said "no," in a very peculiar tone.

I took occasion to ask him, when we were alone, if he had really not met him. He confessed, with some embarrassment, that he had seen him several times in Paris, but had not become acquainted with him.

Radom's strange manner, whenever Hermann was mentioned, made me thoughtful. But I forgot it in the feeling that Langenbach had heard of Radom's frequent visits to our house, and was piqued. It had become a necessity for me to see Radom; it did me good; the sound of his voice filled me with happiness; and his bright, kindly eyes, which beamed with intelligence and nobility, spoke a language to me at times which I should not have understood, but which I was powerless to spurn. "I believe he loves you, Paula!" said my mother once, with a smile.

My heart glowed, and the color flew to my face. I had to turn away so as not to betray myself, for I had long before discovered what my mother had only now found out.

"Consider well, Paula!" continued my mother; "Radom is said to be poor! They say he was adopted by a wealthy uncle, but that the heirs took the best part of the fortune from him, after his uncle's death."

"And if he were poor?" asked I, apparently indifferent. "But I think you are mistaken, mother!"

She did not reply; she seemed to give extraordinary thought to this matter; I saw her, as she gazed before her, slowly shake her head, as if she wished she were mistaken. This wounded me for his sake.

"Leaving your error out of the question entirely, mother," said I, very calmly, "Radom is the most agreeable, intelligent, and interesting gentleman of our acquaintance; just look at our Marquis de Chevreux, that chemical

laboratory, that walking hand-book of conversation, from which he has learnt pages by heart. Or Lieutenant von Langenbach, a dissolute person who is up to his ears in debt, and knows the dowry of every young lady in town to a kreutzer, in order to satisfy his creditors. Look at all the others, who repeat to me the same senseless phrases, so that I always know with what the one or the other will entertain me. Radom, who, without any doubt, has a brilliant diplomatic career before him, you call poor; he, who is a Cræsus compared to the others who trade on their uniforms! What is a man's poverty to me, if his mind is rich?"

"How long is it, Paula, that you spoke differently of Radom, whom I very much like! You called him arrogant and impolite; you complained of his contempt."

"I certainly did so, mother! I did not know him, and he did not wish to be known. I do not even now know why he acted so toward us, and delicacy has prevented my asking him the reason."

My mother changed the subject, and spoke of Hermann's visit. I could see that she was counting the hours; she was forming plans; she saw herself by the side of her handsome son, whom every one would admire. At the joy of again seeing him, her maternal heart had forgotten how often he had wounded her.

CHAPTER XII.

Hermann had arrived, and taken up his abode at the finest hotel in the Residence.

He had quite a household; an intendant, a courier, several servants, grooms, horses, and carriages, and had engaged the first *étage* of the hotel.

He visited us quite ceremoniously. He kissed my mother's hand, pressed a kiss upon my forehead, and took very little notice of the delight of his mother, who could not look at him enough; whose eyes beamed with pride and admiration.

While my mother, once so calm and self-possessed, gave herself up to a state of intoxication, of rapture, which was indescribable; as she looked at him continually, I discovered what had latterly cast a shadow over her spirits, what had given to her illness a still sadder character.

She had missed her son; she secretly reproached herself for leaving him, and with every month her longing for him increased. Her son was wanting, and I, her daughter, no matter how dearly she might love me, could never fill the void in her heart.

It pleased me to see my mother so cheerful.

I tried to ascribe Hermann's coldness to his disposition; I told myself that a man like him—a man of the world—could not possibly remain attached to his family; that in his intercourse with the gay world, he must change, But while my mother listened to his words with delight, I could distinguish the old unkindness, and when I chanced to ask some question which came from the narrow world of a girl's heart, he answered with a superiority which actually surprised me. Not a kind, affectionate word did he have for me, his sister!

As it was forenoon, Hermann remained to *déjeuner* with us, with the promise that he should not see us again for several days, as he had innumerable calls to pay.

This brought a cloud to my mother's brow, but she understood the demands which society made upon her son, and that she must become accustomed to sharing him with the same.

During breakfast, Hermann entertained us so well, that

I could have become completely reconciled to him, yes, even have loved him dearly, had he always been so. He spoke well, though mostly of himself and his high-toned friends.

The conversation turned upon the society at the Residence in which Hermann intended to spend the entire season. He seemed prepossessed in favor of Langenbach, to whom he owed many pleasant hours.

When my mother asked him if he had made the acquaintance in Paris of a Baron von Radom, he answered in the negative, but added that he believed he had heard the name, and perhaps had even seen the person, but that was all.

This answer disturbed me.

I already loved Radom, more than I liked to confess even to myself. I had often tried to find out why he had avoided me, why he had treated me so indifferently. His manner had convinced me that he was struggling with all his might to suppress something which was driving him from me. The only thing that I could put it down to was an aversion to my brother, some unpleasantness which Hermann might so easily have caused.

I had not had the courage to ask Radom about it. I now heard from Hermann's lips that he did not even know Radom, and Hermann was truthful, for in his overbearing pride, he did not think that he need dissemble. Here was a secret which I felt obliged to fathom for the sake of my peace of mind.

How truly had I judged my brother !

His appearance at the Residence created a sensation; he was spoken of with enthusiasm; the world made much of him, for since the young Prince * * * had been completely ruined, and had disappeared, as a natural consequence, without his friends awarding him more than

a shrug of the shoulders, since then there had been lacking the focus for those who felt the need of squandering another's wealth.

The ladies began to rave over him. Hermann's appearance had the effect of electricity upon them; but to their amazement, it was soon reported that Hermann was paying attention to Baroness Stephanie von Ebersburg, whom he had met in Paris.

Many were thunder-struck, especially those who were bent upon fascinating him; however they consoled themselves with thinking that young Count von M. was only flirting with that coquette, and that they could fight with the same weapons.

Lieutenant von Langenbach seemed proud to consider himself my brother's intimate friend.

He took it upon himself to introduce him to society, or rather to introduce society to him. Langenbach, as far as his duty to his prince would permit, never left my brother's side, and the prince finally, out of consideration for my brother, released him from his service for several weeks.

Langenbach never tired of relating about the furore Hermann had created in Paris; of his horse-racing, his fortune and ill-luck in gaming, of his fabulous successes with the Parisian ladies, and all met him half way in admiring the *chic* of Hermann's court-state, his equipages, his servants, etc., and in telling of the princes' carriages which stopped at his door.

My mother and I, of course, were not included in the bachelorship which Hermann led.

We only heard occasionally through others the most astonishing things, which proved that Hermann, with regard to hospitality, was following in his father's footsteps. The gallants of the town, the whole corps of

officers, were his guests, and the heralds of his munificence. Only one seemed to avoid Hermann's soirées and fêtes, and that one was Radom.

He had met Hermann at one of the prince's evening parties. Hermann had called upon him and left his card.

Radom had not returned the courtesy, so Langenbach told us, contemptuously, in order to convince us of Radom's want of civility.

Incomprehensible! If Radom did not like my brother, which was not at all strange to me, why was he not at least civil, for my sake, for though neither of us had uttered a word of love, we had each divined the other's feelings. I loved Radom. I knew that he returned my love, but we had never spoken of it, and I had not dared to ask him the cause of his former conduct toward me.

There must have been something between him and Hermann, which probably Hermann wished to forget, but which Radom treasured up. But that Radom should be so implacable, that for my sake he did not conquer his dislike, I could not understand.

My mother was very much annoyed at what Langenbach told us. She felt that Radom had insulted her, through her son. Her pride could not comprehend how it was that a man like Otto von Radom, a simple young secretary of the legation, should not value such an honor; how a man of his education could so defy the laws of society. Langenbach's words, as he had slyly calculated, fell upon good soil.

Radom's visits had, since Hermann's arrival, grown fewer and more ceremonious. My mother, however, suppressed her displeasure at his treatment of her son, because Radom attended so assiduously to some matters of business for her.

I often met him at the reading circle, which met in the

evenings, with Princess Henrietta, and which, as he assured me, would have bored him terribly, and from which he would have made some pretext to escape had he not been certain of seeing me there.

Upon such occasions I often had an opportunity of speaking with him unobserved. I reproached him for purposely insulting my brother.

He turned pale. It cost him an effort to reply. I saw that he did not wish to tell me an untruth. I perceived that some secret motive forced him to act so, and again he struggled for that mastery over himself which I had often noticed before.

This secret made me uneasy, and whispered me to flee from this man, but it was not in my power to do so. We loved one another without having said so. I felt that my fate was linked with his, and now he had insulted my brother, and through him my mother, upon whom the former had such influence, and all without telling me the reason!

I tried to be angry with him when he evaded my question, but my desire was vain when I met his gaze, so beseeching, so despairing, while his hand involuntarily sought his heart, as if to still the pain there.

Notwithstanding, I would force him to answer! But how? Could I demand that he be candid with me for our love's sake? Love had never been mentioned between us.

Radom knew that and sought safety behind it. I was just seeking a possible way of bringing him to an avowal, when a lady stepped up to us, and we were obliged to change the subject.

During the remainder of the evening, I read the prayer for pardon in his eyes. Even when he uttered the most indifferent words, his voice trembled slightly.

Something troubled him—that miserable “something,” no doubt, which I could not unravel. If he had only spoken one word of love to me, I could have used it to obtain an explanation from him. I could then have shown him how preposterous it was to love me, to count upon winning me, and, at the same time, to insult my relatives.

CHAPTER XIII.

On my arrival home that evening, I found a letter in my room.

The writing on the envelope was unknown to me, and so busy was I with my thoughts, that absently and almost unconsciously, I tore it open and looked at the letter.

It was—Eugenie’s hand-writing, and there was her signature!

I trembled as I read the heading: “Highly honored, beloved countess!” I suspected nothing good. Eugenie in a few lines informed me that she had arrived a week ago, a fugitive and ill. She implored me to honor her with a visit, for she did not dare to enter our house; that she was, in any case, too weak to leave the hospital to which she had been admitted.

“A fugitive and ill!” cried I, deeply moved. “Poor creature! Yes, I will go to her! She needs help; I will not forsake her in her misfortune! My mother must know nothing yet of her being here. I will first learn what brings her!”

It was painful to me to know that she was near me. I also felt in duty bound to make amends for the wrongs of others, though she might have been to blame in a great measure herself.

As I said, my mother should know nothing of this letter, for she had very little patience with her own sex, and I must first see the unhappy girl, in order to decide how much to tell her.

The next morning was gray and foggy, but I expressed a desire to visit the hospital which, as luck would have it, was quite near us. My mother was never visible until toward noon, so I asked Marie, if she should inquire for me, to tell her that I had driven to town to make some purchases. Christmas, which was approaching, allowed of some secrets from my mother.

I had an unpleasant walk. The fog had turned into a heavy rain, which drenched me before I obtained a cab. They must not recognize me in that institution; and I protected myself against recognition by drawing the hood of my mackintosh over my head.

With a beating heart, I drove into the hospital court and asked the porter in which wing of the building I should find the number Eugenie had given me.

The porter, who naturally was not inspired with any great respect for a visitor to this refuge for the unfortunate, blew a suffocating whiff from his pipe into my face, and pointed silently to the right. Crossing the dirty court-yard, I came to some steep, worn, wooden steps.

I mounted them with difficulty. A disagreeable, heavy atmosphere met me in the long corridor. The enormous locks on the doors on both sides of the hall reminded me more of a prison than of a charitable institution. I was horrified at the thought of any one finding convalescence here.

I met several old women with misanthropical faces, who looked at me questioningly. I ventured to address a few words to one of them.

She pointed silently to the end of the corridor.

Here they seemed to spare all useless conversation. So I continued my miserable walk, and finally stood before a door, upon which the number "35" was written in chalk.

It took some seconds to regain my breath.

I knocked softly and timidly. A feeble voice answered. It was Eugenie's; I recognized it, although it had changed.

Then Eugenie lay at my feet.

Clinging to my knees, hiding her face, she broke into loud sobs, which I could not silence. Her whole body was convulsed; my heart ached and my eyes were filled with tears as I looked down upon the unfortunate girl.

"Eugenie, I pray you, compose yourself! Forbear, for you are ill!"

For a long time I spoke in vain. Sobs choked her voice, and she clung more convulsively about my knees.

"You will compel me to leave you, Eugenie! You know I can not bear tears!" cried I, at last, gravely, and then only did she try to stifle her sobs.

Her arms dropped. She was upon her knees, her hands folded, looking at the floor, as if she did not dare to show her face.

I stepped back and then first saw the change in her. Pain and care had made her ten years older, and left deep furrows on her once fresh face. Her eyes were sunken, and had deep, black circles around them, and when, her hands folded, she raised those eyes beseechingly to me, as if praying for pardon, I was startled at her appearance.

"Eugenie, for Heaven's sake what has happened to you?" cried I, seizing her wasted hands, of whose shape and whiteness she had once been so proud, and raising her. "You tremble! You are suffering!"

I cast a disconsolate glance at her surroundings, a wretchedly hard bed, a table, a chair, and an earthen bowl.

Eugenie nodded silently and shook back the locks which had fallen on her brow. I saw then how sunken her temples were, and saw also a small, red scar.

With gentle sympathy I took her hand, led her to the bed, and forced her to seat herself on the edge of it, while I seated myself opposite her on the chair.

"Eugenie," began I, as her eyes still sought the floor, "I have come to be useful, to help you, if I can. Let us leave the past behind us; speak to me as a friend. Has the doctor seen you to-day?"

Eugenie answered in the negative.

"But do you not feel very ill?"

"Yes," she breathed; "but it will pass off."

Scarcely had she spoken, when she was seized with a chill.

"With God's help you will soon recover, Eugenie," said I to her consolingly. "You shall want for nothing. You shall leave this miserable place; it will not be difficult to find another shelter for you. Trust in me, Eugenie, as you always did. If I can serve you in any way, tell me so. My money is at your service; I will——"

Eugenie reached for a well-filled purse which lay next her on the bed, and put it in her lap to show me that she was not without money.

"Yesterday, ill as I was, I sold the trinkets which the gracious countess gave me," she said.

"Then you were in town yesterday?"

"I was obliged to go. Immediately upon my arrival I sought out a woman whom I had formerly known, in order to give my child into her care——"

"Your—child?"

"You have probably heard, gracious countess," she continued, with some bitterness, "that I—am married; that I was forced to marry Schoolmaster Mittler."

"I heard of it. It was your own fault, Eugenie——"

"Yes, I am to blame for my misery," she interrupted. "When I left you, or rather had to leave you, I was almost beside myself. I was like the rabbit which is obliged to run into the monster's mouth."

"I do not dare to blame others, who are nearly related to you; but I blame myself for not having the courage, guilty as I was, to cling to the bottom of the lake when they drew me out. My place was there, for I was lost. What happened afterward was madness, for I did not regain consciousness. I rushed blindly into the world and suddenly found myself again at the castle. I knew that they would treat me contemptuously there, but I scorned myself, and when I was married to that boy, I considered it my just punishment. When that took place I came to myself. There were again hours, days in which I could think calmly, if not quite clearly. I determined to live within myself, in solitude; soulless, thoughtless, a machine, which moves until it can go no more. I took no more interest in anything, and the world about me concerned me not. Weeks passed thus; then I was awakened from my apathy. At first I heard harsh words, then I felt a hand upon me, which touched me roughly, ill-treated me. This hand belonged to the man whom I knew had a right to me as to a slave, from whom I did not expect anything else than to be treated as such. He overwhelmed me with oaths, knocked me about, and beat me."

Eugenie pointed to a scar upon her forehead.

"I suffered all this without murmuring a long, long time. One day I heard him say that he had a much bet-

ter position in view. After that he put me and the child out of the house on to the street.

“Then only,” continued Eugenie, after drawing a deep breath, “I awoke, as if I had lain for some time in a terrible dream. I felt as if I were awakening, as if my natural activity were returning, as if the fear of this man had suddenly left me—this wolf in sheep’s clothing, who, from the moment when I, confused and unconscious, entered his house, had mistreated me. At the same time my thoughts flew to my situation and to the conviction of what I had become, with horror. For the first time, I wept; the tears poured from my eyes. I pressed my poor, innocent babe to my bosom, and rose from the stone upon which I had sunk. I looked about, undecided which direction to take. The feeling of fear and anxiety returning, made me shiver. I flew through the fields until I reached the woods. There I hid in the underwood, so that he should not find me, for I had decided not to return. The cries of my poor child made me think of seeking another shelter, but it was already night. In the village they might have taken me for a vagrant. I had no warm clothing, for I had been turned out of doors as I was; my child was cold and fretful. For that reason I ventured into the vicinity of the village when it was quite dark, and sheltered under some straw. Early in the morning when I awoke I remembered that I had not a crown to buy food for myself and my child. Helplessly I entered the village. There fate threw into my way an old lady whom I knew. I told her my troubles; I intrusted my child to her. She was to procure a lodging for it in the village with her daughter until I returned.

“I wanted to go back once more at an hour when I knew my tormentor would be at the parsonage, to

enter the house, take my jewels and some money from the place in which I had secreted them, and then fly. I hoped to be able to earn enough by teaching my mother-tongue to save myself and my child from starvation.

“So I came here, gracious countess, in the hope of perhaps obtaining a situation through your influence; for I knew that you, with your kind heart, would not be angry with me. I would not have done so, however, I confess, if, on the way, I had not been attacked by a fever, if, it had been possible to go any farther with my unhappy child. No, indeed, countess, I would not have dared to give you the least trouble,” she repeated, while tears coursed down her cheeks, “and I will go away. I only longed to see you once again, that I could go on, and on I must go, as far as possible! Anguish, fear, will not let me remain, for yesterday, when I had sold my trinkets, I saw him upon the street who so cruelly caused my misfortune.”

Sobs choked Eugenie's voice. Pity for the girl's misery filled my breast. I knew what she was capable of doing if despondency got the better of her. I also felt the necessity of making amends as far as I could for my brother's ill-treatment of this girl, although she herself was to blame for the best part of it.

I left her after obtaining a promise from her to compose herself, in order to hasten her convalescence. She told me to whom she had given her child. I then sent for the matron, commissioned her to take good care of the invalid, and when I reached the corridor, slipped a piece of money into her hand. My playmate's fate affected me deeply. My mother must know nothing of her being here, for though she sympathized with the sufferings of others, she still considered Eugenie ungrate-

ful and frivolous, and thought she should be left to her fate.

In addition to that, my mother was not at all likely to be angry with Hermann. The share that he had in the girl's misery, she now saw in a milder light than formerly. I had even heard her once say she now saw that Eugenie was far more to blame for that incident at the castle than Hermann, and she thought that Hermann was right in saying that the girl must be kept in her place. Ambition had encouraged her to try to please him, and this ambition had in all probability been caused by her education, which raised her above her proper station.

It would have been difficult to make my mother change her opinion. If I had occasionally suspected that vanity had driven Eugenie to her ruin, the next morning I was convinced of her innocence when she told me her story with the greatest candor.

Yes, she had admired Hermann; she still admired him, she informed me. Never in her childhood had she been capable of anger toward him when he wounded her, and even to-day she was not angry with him. Hermann, she swore by all that was holy, without our knowing or suspecting it, had vented his insolence upon her long before we left the castle; for in his eyes, probably just to defy his mother's rights, she was not any better than one of the village servants, in fact was less than they, for she was a "common French hussy," whom, as he told her, they could drive over the boundaries any day, and it should certainly be done if she complained of him.

As Eugenie saw that even my mother feared Hermann, she was intimidated by his threats, and feeling herself defenseless, she looked upon the lake as her last resort.

She told me that she was often on the point of seeking protection from me; at least of confiding in me, but

through me my mother might have found it out. She might have taken Hermann to task. Hermann would have revenged himself upon her, and—— some day she looked upon the lake as her consolation and refuge.

When my mother's unkindness forced her to leave us she was glad, although the parting from me was hard. Where she should turn she had not planned. All that was in her mind was the lake. Undesignedly, scarcely conscious of it herself, she returned to the castle. All that she knew about it was that she intended to obtain from my mother's housekeeper who was there, the dresses and other things which she had left with her on our departure. Eugenie admitted that this might have been an excuse with which she deceived herself; that more probably a vague hope had led her there—a hope behind which lay the lake.

When she spoke of her reappearance at the castle she hid her face.

"I wanted to leave," said she, "but it seemed as if my feet were fettered. I daily determined to seek death where I had once before sought it, for I saw and heard the castle servants ridicule me. When I had finally made up my mind, and had written a letter of farewell to you, dearest countess, in which I begged your forgiveness, I found myself a prisoner—I could not escape my fate, and was sacrificed to a coarse, ignorant man, by whose side I lived on, only clinging to life for my child's sake. This man turned me out when he had a better position in prospect. I can not say," concluded Eugenie, "that I really suffered under his roof. Heaven sent me an insensibility, the result of the excess of my sufferings, which helped me to bear my fate, for to-day the whole affair seems like a terrible dream, in which only one thing is true, that my life, over the first epoch of which a favor-

able star shone, is lost, lost forever! God forgive me my share of the guilt! I am homeless and unprotected; I feel that my strength is gone, my health undermined, and were it not for my child, I should thank Heaven to end the life which can only be friendless and miserable!"

CHAPTER XIV.

My joy was unbounded. I had succeeded! Radom, who had not been able to give me an explanation of the breach of etiquette he had committed against my brother, had, at my request, bridged over the gulf which existed between him and Hermann.

An occasion had presented itself, which he took advantage of. His unceasing endeavors had succeeded in saving my mother's threatened inheritance. She was highly delighted. She told Hermann that Radom had held back so long because he hoped, from day to day, to present himself to him as the warm champion of his family.

Hermann received him graciously. He who was accustomed to flattery, took my mother's prevarication for pure coin. Radom again visited us; indeed, he had the run of the house; notwithstanding which, he only met my brother when it was unavoidable; but their relations were pleasant.

Alas! this friendship was not of long duration. Langenbach, to whom Otto von Radom was a thorn in the flesh, prejudiced Hermann against him, and Langenbach was my brother's oracle; he had become indispensable to him.

Langenbach found only too easily a basis for his intrigues; Hermann's deep interest in Baroness Stephanie, which was very plain to every one, gave him a chance.

This lady, a thorough coquette, beautiful, dangerously beautiful, had always particularly favored Radom, although

it was known that he only returned this distinction as far as politeness demanded.

Several stories were told, according to which Radom had evaded the advances which Stephanie von Ebersburg made, with all sorts of excuses, without ridding himself of her.

Radom did not like to speak of her, and usually tried to avoid any conversation about her. As I supposed, he too had met her in Paris, where she created quite a sensation by her beauty.

Stephanie von Ebersburg and her mother had not succeeded in obtaining admission to court. Langenbach, they said, was trying everything in his power to induce the queen to change her sentiments.

Stephanie was reported to be very wealthy, to which report the elegance of her toilets testified. She was said to have several times refused gentlemen of high position. She made no secret of her passion for my brother, and he seemed entirely carried away with her, though he entertained such contempt for women generally; he paid her, so they said, the greatest attention, had eyes only for her, when he met her in society, and was unsuspicious to the admiration which was shown him on all sides.

Stephanie was the cause of another disagreement between my mother and her son. She heard everywhere of his liking for Baroness Stephanie, especially from those mothers who hoped, or had hoped for their daughters, and were provoked at Stephanie.

Hermann got the start of my mother. He asked to see the list of those whom she intended inviting to an evening party.

He sought one name which was wanting.

"Why are not Baroness von Ebersburg and her daughter invited?" cried he.

My mother explained to him that she had no cause to invite them.

"I wish it!" answered Hermann, shortly, and my mother was weak enough to yield, in the secret hope of their not accepting the invitation.

Stephanie's appearance at our house that evening astonished all. Even I, who, though admiring her beauty, entertained an aversion to her, was obliged to treat her courteously. My mother saw the surprise on her guests' faces, but received the ladies most politely.

When Radom spied them, he approached me. We had confessed our love a short while before.

"For God's sake, Paula, how comes she here?" cried he, in astonishment.

"At my brother's request!" I whispered to him. "Not another word, Otto!"

"An insult! you do not know who she is!" escaped from him in his agitation.

I started, but quickly collected myself, for Langenbach with his argus eye, had observed us, and came up to me.

"Do you not think Baroness von Ebersburg charming, divine, countess?" asked he, knowing that I had always admired Stephanie's beauty very disinterestedly. "If *two* crowns were allowable in a gathering, she would be awarded the second!"

He accompanied his words by a look so familiar, that I should have considered him impertinent, had he not gained a right to this familiarity, as Hermann's inseparable friend, so I could only protest inwardly.

Radom bit his lips and left me to Langenbach and Stephanie's mother, to whom the latter paid a similar compliment, when suddenly Stephanie, who had been conversing with the still sentimental Marquis de Chev-

reux, joined us, her fine handkerchief held to her nose, and a roguish smile in her eyes.

"It seemed to me as if I were wandering in Sharon's garden amidst the perfume of roses," said she, merrily, at the same time glancing around to convince herself of the effect of her appearance, which, as a rule, was never behind her expectations.

It is true, Stephanie was beautiful. The white satin dress, interwoven with golden threads, seemed chosen to show that her complexion, which vied with the snow, could stand the test; the flowers in her hair were chosen to bring out her complexion, and drooped lightly and gracefully upon her classically formed neck; while her abundant, golden hair was sprinkled with a scarcely perceptible glittering powder, which increased its luster in the bright glare of the gas.

Stephanie's dress was designed simply, with the certain calculation of fascinating.

The style and length of her robe disclosed the tip of her fairy-like foot; bosom and arms were seductively, but not offensively, décolleté, and only a close observer could have discovered that artificial means had been employed upon her complexion, that the almond-shaped lids of her large, fiery eyes had been traced by a master-hand, and that the carmine upon her lips had been taken from a palette.

Radom's remark had had its effect upon me.

It had escaped him against his will; with the admiration which I involuntarily paid this beauty, there was mingled a feeling of mistrust, which I tried to suppress.

After the interchange of several polite phrases, I sought a pretext in order to free myself from Langenbach.

I saw Marie near, who, in the capacity of companion, always joined our small companies.

I beckoned to her. She started up, but on the way suddenly staggered, drew herself up with difficulty and left the room, unable to answer my call.

I looked after her anxiously, but at that moment my attention was claimed by a captain, who was accompanied by a young man, and begged permission to introduce Herr Carlsburg, his former comrade, who had arrived that morning, and for whom he had obtained an invitation.

Carlsburg, he added, had several years ago deserted the king's standard, had joined that of Mercury, and was now manager of a large bank at B.

I was struck by the fresh and genial face of this young man, which I must have seen before, but just at that moment it was not clear to me where and when.

A half hour passed before I found an opportunity to escape from my duties as hostess.

I wished to know what had befallen Marie, whom I sought in vain. I inquired for her. No one had seen her. I hastened to my room, then to hers, and there saw her in her simple ball dress lying upon her bed, weeping.

Bending over her, I asked what had happened. The spasms returned, and she could not speak; not a word could I get out of her, and of what avail would it have been? I could see in what a deplorable condition the unhappy girl was.

I rang. I sent quickly for a doctor, and made her as easy as I knew how, and with an anxious heart I was compelled to return to the drawing-room, where probably, my mother had missed me; but I went back to the sick-room as soon as I could.

The whole evening I was miserable; for the doctor looked serious. He said that only some great shock to her mind could have caused the trouble.

Even when toward midnight the convulsions were quieted, Marie would make no explanation; I had to divide my attentions between her and the company, and could not see what was taking place amongst the latter.

As finally toward 2 o'clock they dispersed, when I had again sought my friend and found her sound asleep, I told my mother about her condition.

She was put out. Something must have happened that evening to sadden her.

I was glad when I could seek my bed.

Marie's attack had deprived me of the pleasure of seeing Otto, and of exchanging a few loving words with him; I, too, was depressed.

Sleep had forsaken me. I was excited. My heart beat restlessly. I thought of Stephanie and Marie, although there was no connection between the two. I also tried to recall where I had met Herr Carlsburg, whom the ladies praised as a good conversationalist and dancer.

Suddenly a light broke in upon me. One day when I was looking for Marie in her room, and she was at her mother's, I had seen a photograph which Carlsburg resembled.

I now had the clue to Marie's secret.

She had some love-trouble, had had it a long time. She had always told me when I questioned her that it was her mother's condition which made her so sad.

But now I knew all. Carlsburg—yes, he wore his uniform in the picture, and therefore I did not recognize him at once—Carlsburg had once been an officer stationed here; he had left the service and sought his fortune in the business world. He loved Marie, or rather he had loved her; she—still loved him. There was not the slightest doubt of it. Marie had tottered just at the

moment when the captain had brought his friend up to me, overcome by the sight of him.

The ladies might consider that Carlsburg interesting as a companion and dancer; he now appeared to me in the light of an unscrupulous fellow, for he had evidently basely deserted poor Marie, that angel of gentleness and beauty; he now was so little concerned about her that he did not even know her fate; that he had not the faintest suspicion of finding her in our house.

This was the second sad experience in our domestic relations. Eugenie, in the hospital, slowly convalescing, and now Marie in a probably worse condition.

Worn out by the excitement of the preceding evening, very little refreshed by the short rest which I had obtained toward morning, I was in Marie's room before daybreak. She was more composed, but the attack had greatly changed her.

I was startled when I examined her by the dim light of the lamp. Marie seemed ashamed, she put both hands before her face so that I could not see it, then she grasped my hand, begged my pardon, and thanked me for my sympathy.

I spent an hour with her and then left her, hoping that she would be able to sleep. I did not betray by a word that which chance had disclosed to me.

My mother was very silent all the forenoon, and showed very little interest in Marie.

When at noon Radom came to call, I was delighted to be able to receive him alone. He should tell me all that had happened at the soirée, for I had seen so little in my abstraction.

Radom came to bring my mother some papers relating to her affairs and to obtain her signature.

This furnished me with an excuse to detain him until

my mother awoke, for she was taking a short nap. I seldom had an opportunity of speaking with him alone.

He said that he had not taken note of what was passing amongst the guests any more than I, for they did not interest him after I disappeared.

I knew, however, that, as a diplomatist, he very reluctantly spoke of the affair of others, and it cost me some trouble to find out what I had anticipated, namely—that Hermann had only eyes and ears for Stephanie von Ebersburg, and thereby had slighted all the other young ladies present.

I asked him if he had seen Herr Carlsburg, and learned that he was paying attention to the banker's daughter, who was neither young nor handsome, but upon whom, to all appearances, he had made an impression.

Poor Marie!

What would I not have given to throw them together, unforeseen by either, when he paid his promised visit! But I did not dare attempt it, for I had to consider Marie's health, which had been ruined by this young man's faithlessness; even leaving that out of the question, she was in no condition to see him at present.

The worst would be—when she should learn that that miserable man was courting the wealthy heiress—that his suit was favorably looked upon, as Radom had informed me.

In vain I urged Radom to tell me what his hasty words regarding Stephanie had meant.

He did not seem to like it. I explained to him that my question was not curiosity; that, on account of the attention which my brother was paying her, it was necessary that I should find out what he knew about her. His communication, which I drew from him in monosyllables,

was of such a kind as to inspire me with abhorrence for the woman.

Radom maintained—and what he said could always be relied upon—that she had been very closely connected with a certain personage at the Napoleonic court; the money for her expensive toilets she obtained from the sale of one of the estates near Paris, which perhaps, but that he only surmised, had been given her in recognition of her services as secret emissary.

The improbability of this made me doubt the first part of his story.

I told Radom that he was unjust. He averred that Stephanie did not stand alone in this peculiar mission, but added that of course he only suspected her; he had no positive proof.

When Radom had taken his leave, I told my mother what I had heard from him. She then informed me that a similar story had reached her ears, and therein consisted her aversion to both of the Ebersburgs. She regretted having yielded to Hermann's wishes, and having invited them; and still more odious to her was the interest which her son so openly took in these ladies.

The whole day she was depressed; she had decided, she told me, to break off all further intercourse with them "in spite of Hermann!"

My announcement regarding Marie she received coldly. She called it another "foolish *liaison*."

The young man, in his position as a poor officer, had probably had no intention of marrying her; Marie should have known that, and if now, in his present career, he sought money, it was pardonable.

"Is it also pardonable to break a poor, confiding girl's heart?" I cried out.

"At any rate, it is nothing unusual! She should have

been clever enough to renounce him, when she found that there was no hope."

My mother had grown unfeeling, and showed it toward those who were beneath her. Therefore, my sympathy was increased for Marie, who, under my care, was recovering, or at least was more composed if her strength did not return; and when Carlsburg, who still had no suspicion that the Marie whom he had deserted was in our house, called, I withdrew, not feeling able to receive such a dishonorable person.

One morning, some eight days later, Marie's eyes were filled with tears of gladness.

She told me, forgetting her own pain, that her father's reputation, his honor, had been cleared. One of the former officials had acknowledged on his death-bed that he had appropriated that sum of money, and her father's property, which had been confiscated by the crown, was to be at once restored to her mother.

"Now my poor mother will be freed from her cares, and the grief caused by my father's supposed guilt will be removed from her breast!" cried she with beaming eyes.

The next day the newspapers announced the engagement of Carlsburg and the wealthy banker's daughter. I hid the paper from Marie. But she must have heard of it some other way, for from that day she was quiet and reserved, and even the sad smile with which she usually greeted me was gone. In addition to that she surprised me by expressing a wish to return to her mother, who, she said, needed her so much, and nothing could turn her from that purpose.

I was obliged to give her up, but only on the condition that she would come to me as often as she possibly could. I had become very fond of that gentle, affectionate

creature—there was something almost angelic about her, and I felt doubly for her in her trouble.

When Marie left me I felt deserted; I missed her everywhere. I had become accustomed to having some one about me to whom I could tell my troubles and delights, for my mother was always busy within herself; she read a great deal, indulged in her own thoughts, and was often moody; and the weakness which often attacked her, made her so nervous that she could not bear the faintest sound.

In order to amuse myself I tried to cultivate the friendship of several young ladies at the Residence, but did not succeed. I could listen for a while to their senseless chatter, but it gave me no pleasure.

CHAPTER XV.

Radom had for some time taken the place of the absent ambassador. He had been promised the position in the future.

Our relations could no longer remain secret. I urged him to speak to my mother, and Otto was only awaiting the confirmation of his office, which he daily expected.

A strangely uneasy feeling had taken possession of me without my being able to account for it.

Everything went on as usual. Small assemblies at home and at our friends, the theater, and balls at court, as well as at private houses, made me forget the gloomy, wintry weather.

Marquis de Chevreux had forgotten his rejection. He was very absent, but all said it was a result of the effect of all the essences and extracts upon his brain. The doctor himself had warned him, and to this warning was

it attributed that the atmosphere about him was more endurable for others. When he now approached it seemed to us as if the wind bore toward us the soft, delicious perfume of flowers.

Langenbach had been promoted to the rank of captain, and as he had some weeks before accompanied the prince to several foreign courts, he had received some new decorations, of which he was very proud.

Hermann visited us seldom. He was lonesome during Langenbach's absence, which proved to me how much he depended upon that designing officer, who was continually preparing new amusements for him. As I heard from Radom, Hermann very generously settled Langenbach's debts, and this was probably the cause of the latter's unusually conscious manner.

We were of course the last to hear of the frivolous people for whom Hermann prepared small fêtes in his apartments, of the fine gifts he bestowed upon actresses and ballet girls. I recognized Langenbach as the author of all this, and therefore disliked him more than ever, especially when he came to pay his respects to us, with a face upon which nights spent in excesses was plainly written.

One morning, when a snow-storm was raging outside, covering the ground with a thick, white carpet, I was sitting in my mother's room.

She had a book in her hand which Radom had brought and recommended, while I was doing some fancy-work.

My mother was delighted with her book, praised Radom's refined taste, and returned to her reading.

I went to the fire-place in order to poke the fire, although it was burning brightly. I wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to prepare my mother for Otto's suit, and did not dare to turn my face toward her.

"Herr von Radom is certainly a man of noblest, most refined character, and the only one of our gentlemen in whom a girl could take an interest."

My heart beat as I spoke, and still more anxiously did I await the answer.

"Oh, yes, Radom is a man who would take a well-bred girl's fancy."

My mother said this after she had finished her sentence, without raising her eyes from her book.

I was very much puzzled how to continue, for my mother had dropped the subject.

Still I *had* to speak. Time was pressing, and so was my anxiety.

While I was casting about for the right words, a voice in the street interrupted me.

I looked out and saw my brother's carriage stop before the door. Hermann sprang quickly out.

When my brother last visited us I had had a small dispute with him; I was, therefore, undecided whether to leave the room or remain.

In the meantime he entered and threw himself, according to his custom, into a chair, with a slight greeting.

A side glance at him convinced me that he had something extraordinary on his mind. I therefore started for the door, while my mother slowly put her book aside.

"Paula, why are you going?" cried Hermann.

"So as not to witness your quarrels!" answered I, indifferently.

"But I have something to say which concerns you," said he, examining his finger-tips. "Mother knows something about it."

I looked at my mother, then at him, and returned to the stool at the fire-place.

"I am surprised that you trouble yourself about me."

"You will see that I do it more than you seem to think," he continued.

"My brother has never given me occasion to think so." Absently I poked the fire. Hermann seemed not to have heard my answer.

"You must marry, Paula," said he, without looking at me, "and that is certainly a subject which is highly interesting to a young girl."

My heart again beat violently. I glanced anxiously at my mother, who was looking out of the window at the snow which was slowly falling.

I took courage, for I felt that it would be necessary.

"What kind of an impression would it make upon you, if I should come and say to you, 'you must marry?'"

Hermann drew down the corners of his mouth scornfully, and looked over at my mother to invite her attention, without vouchsafing me a reply.

"To come to the point, mother," he began, "I come on an errand for Captain Langenbach, who begs for Paula's hand; after obtaining your consent, he will speak to Paula herself."

My mother paused, then turned her face slowly toward me, as if she wished to find out what effect those words had had upon me. I sat motionless, staring at the fire; but she could not see that my face had turned deathly pale. Before my mother had time to answer, I had lost control of myself. A flush superseded the pallor upon my face.

"Tell your friend that he need not have taken such a round-about way to learn that although his proposal is very flattering to me, it has no other effect."

With that I sprang up and walked toward the door, to escape to my room.

A half-suppressed, mocking laugh followed me. It was

the same laugh which he had vexed us with when a boy.

When I had reached my room, I concluded that I had acted indiscreetly in leaving him the field. But I comforted myself with the thought that my mother surely would not dispose of me without my consent. Then I reproached myself for not having openly avowed my love for Radom to my mother before Hermann's arrival.

Had I not intended doing so when Hermann interrupted me? I had only needed a minute's time and the words would have been spoken.

I shuddered at the bare thought of becoming Langenbach's wife, and if until now I had only entertained an aversion to him, I now looked upon him as a schemer, a spendthrift, who designed to obtain possession of me, and through me of my fortune, by means of my brother's influence. My mind revolted at this possibility; it seemed utterly impossible for me to give up Radom.

Anxiously I paced up and down my room. I felt as if my danger increased with every second. I imagined the conversation between my mother and brother; how he would, in his imperious way, take upon himself the right to govern me; how he would tell my mother that he had pledged his word to Langenbach, and how my mother, who was as wax in her son's hands, would perhaps object, for she knew from what I had said that I disliked the man; how Hermann upon that would put all of Langenbach's good qualities in their best light, and finally would declare that he should carry his point, for he must keep his word; how at last my mother would appease him by promising to exert her influence upon me to induce me, whereupon Hermann would take his leave, after expressing the wish to have the matter settled by a certain day.

Scarcely a quarter of an hour had elapsed when I heard the sound of wheels upon the snow. I saw the carriage drive off. They could have lost no time, for Hermann left so quickly; very probably he drove directly to his friend to tell him that all was arranged; he could propose to me himself on the appointed day.

Such was Hermann's nature, and he could not change it. It was his custom to dictate his will in an independent, imperious manner; to know no reason, no relenting, no mercy; to expect the fulfillment of his desires; and the parasites, by whom he was always surrounded, who divined his slightest wish, strengthened him in these habits which had become second nature.

Brotherly love had been a stranger to him when a child, and he now had not the faintest spark of affection for his sister, who was to be the reward he gave an egotist like Langenbach, who in "self-sacrificing friendship" had devoted himself to him for his own selfish ends.

But Hermann should learn that his sister had just as firm a will, which knew no obedience where it was unjustly demanded, and that this will would even resist my mother's desires, if she were weak enough to allow others to dictate to her and me.

After that decision I was calmer. Radom should to-day receive a few lines from me. He should appeal to my mother, and, as there was nothing against his position and character, as even slander had not dared to touch him, my will must decide.

Very much easier, my mind made up, I soon after went down-stairs.

My mother had retired to her bed-room; her maid told me she did not wish to be disturbed, as she was suffering with a severe headache.

That confirmed the suspicion I had of what had passed

between her and Hermann. Every excitement caused a headache, and probably the first disagreement with Hermann, after their reconciliation, would be doubly agitating.

However that might be, my mother's indisposition betrayed to me at least that she had tried to protect me against his arbitrariness, and that made my attitude toward my brother more confident. I looked upon it all as a plot between my brother and Langenbach against my peace of mind, my happiness; nor did I count much upon my mother's help; in case of necessity I should have to defend myself.

CHAPTER XVI.

While my brother in his cold, unfeeling manner, imagined that he could rule my destiny, he himself became the prey to a passion which was already the talk of the town.

Our residence was not large enough to ensure one's private life from the judgment of the people; and a man like Count von M., who ruled over millions and counted his revenues by the hundreds of thousands, could surely not escape them.

Stephanie von Ebersburg was considered by all beautiful, by many clever, witty, piquant and original, but by some fickle, designing and coquettish, and this latter opinion soon gained superiority.

She was very well bred; her appearance, her conversation, her dress, breathed forth that unmistakable *esprit* which is only obtained in the highest circles; her conversation was entertaining, overflowing with natural wit, and sometimes I had occasion to wonder at the bold-

ness with which she, in speaking with gentlemen, would encroach upon territory which is beyond most women's powers; the versatility and knowledge were marvelous, however, which she exhibited on those heights.

She had especially chosen the poor Marquis de Chevreux as the sport of her coquetry and her caprices; and he, who was enrolled amongst the first of her numerous admirers, had himself confessed that he felt obliged to summon all his scorn of death to his aid in such a dangerous position, in order to make head against the fire of her eyes and the keenness of her mental weapons.

Chevreux, it was said, was consoling himself for the rejection he had received from me, in his adoration of Stephanie. He was always near her, and to her influence may it be ascribed that he did not use so much perfumery.

They said of Stephanie that she often talked upon subjects which are avoided by most women. It might only have been her excessive merriment. Here is an instance.

Stephanie had appeared in some tableaux as Bellona, and had been very warmly admired.

Marquis de Chevreux, after the representation, began an argument with her about the custom of always representing war and victory in our sober, Christian, military states by females.

"I think it preposterous," said he. "All are against the emancipation of women; we consider it bad taste if we see a woman, though she may be a lovely one, in an unwomanly dress; a lady who would appear in our streets with only a walking-stick, would be ridiculed; if, in time of war, she came with shield and lance, she would be considered mad; and yet, poetry clings to the classical immorality of exhibiting courage and strength by means of the most subtle, delicate creatures, to whom steel and

iron are so adverse that it even pains me to see a needle in their dainty hands."

Stephanie on her side mentioned the Amazons and the female guard of the King of Dahomey.

Chevreux went into details, and showed her that women were not formed for the rough and terrible work of war.

She listened to him up to a certain point, when Chevreux in his excitement drew out his scented handkerchief; she then interrupted his discourse, and cried with a laugh:

"You are right, Marquis, man is the symbol of strength! Hannibal's warriors were enervated in Capua by the scent of the oranges and flowers. What would *your* ancestors, who so bravely fought against the Saracens, say if they could see that standard in your hand?"

That evening Stephanie looked so lovely that, had I been a man, I could have fallen in love with her myself. With masterly coquetry she had known how to show to advantage as Bellona, and later, when she appeared in her ball-dress, she, who earlier had been so imposing as Goddess of War, was now as delicate and ethereal as a fairy; roguish and merry as a child; and received the gentlemen's compliments with truly bewitching grace.

Hermann that evening was enchanted with her. More than ever he ignored the impression he was making upon the other ladies; he saw only her, and once I was terrified by a glance which they exchanged, a glance which would have wounded an innocent girl's heart, which disclosed to me an understanding between them, which could not possibly have stood a trial before a severe judge.

From that evening I was inclined to put faith in the stories afloat about Stephanie. I recalled Radom's insinuation when he saw her at our soirée. I felt sorry

that such a charming exterior should conceal so corrupt a mind, and at the same time I was troubled about my brother; although I could not make up my mind to believe that Hermann, with his contempt for our sex, could really be threatened with any danger in that direction.

Nevertheless he spoke in town of their intimacy, and as usual, this story was embellished with details, which very likely were groundless.

How much my mother heard of these rumors I do not know. Hermann had once been her idol, and notwithstanding his objectionable mode of life, he assumed the right of governing in our house, which right my mother readily conceded to him.

On the evening of the day upon which Hermann had visited us, my mother sent for me to her boudoir.

I found her upon the sofa, not suffering, as she said, but grave and very dejected.

"Paula," she began, when at her suggestion I had moved my footstool to the side of the sofa, "you heard Hermann's wish this morning. I have considered the same, and find that there is nothing to be done against his choice. He gave me to understand that this is also the wish of Her Majesty, the Queen, who will speak to me about it upon the first opportunity that offers; it was therefore necessary to prepare both you and me."

My mother now ceased, awaiting my reply.

"Did you hear me, Paula?" she asked, after a pause, no answer being forthcoming.

"I did, mother!"

"Are you then satisfied?"

"No!"

"Why not? Captain von Langenbach is one of our nicest officers; there is a brilliant career before him."

"Which I do not propose to share, mother!"

"Did you not understand that the queen wishes it?"

"I can not grant the queen the right over my heart and happiness. The privilege of being admitted to court does not outweigh my peace and welfare, and you know that my father even rejected that privilege, when he could not reconcile it with his pride and his claims. I have been told that it was not the fault alone of my father's over-weening pride, of his too sensitive temperament that he withdrew from the court, but that he left the field to intrigues, which he did not consider worth contesting, and which were not unknown to the queen. I do not care to have her interfere with my life."

"If it were my wish, too, Paula?"

"It is not, mother! It is only an idea which Hermann has stirred up, and which I, even if I had no other reason, would spurn on that account; for Hermann has, in my eyes, no right to any authority over me, which he would misuse at the cost of my happiness to favor the companion of his libertinism."

"It was your father's will, which he impressed upon me, that Hermann, as soon as he had attained his majority, should perform toward us all those duties which he had done during his life-time."

My mother said this impressively. I knew by her voice that my fate was decided.

"To honor my father's will shall be a sacred duty to me," I answered, with the same decision, "but Hermann will never rule me. As long as he can not prove to me by his own life that he is worthy and capable of acting in the same spirit as my beloved father, I shall receive no commands from him."

My mother seemed annoyed. She recognized unwillingly the truth and justice of my words.

"Langenbach has Hermann's promise," she continued, after a pause.

"But not mine, which he will never obtain."

"You know Hermann! You know very well how highly he prizes the value and inviolableness of his word."

"He could only give Captain von Langenbach that word as far as he himself was concerned. He has kept his promise."

"I fear you have already given your heart."

The severity of her voice struck me.

"You fear, mother? Do you think that your daughter would choose an unworthy object?"

"You love Herr von Radom, Paula. It has not escaped my notice."

"Counting upon your penetration, mother, I did not think it necessary to confess to you, what could not remain a secret. Yes, I love Otto von Radom, and he has my promise!"

"I spoke of my suspicions to Hermann. He indignantly declared that he would never consent to such a thing. I, for my part, have nothing against the man, but there must be something between those two that will prevent anything of the kind."

A secret fear raged in my heart. Again that "something" which I had tried so fruitlessly to fathom, and that "something" again oppressed me.

Perhaps Hermann had spoken to my mother about it.

"I do not know what can be between them." I answered, in a suppressed voice. "I know, of course, that their habits, passions, and inclinations are as different as their characters, but as far as I know, they first became acquainted here."

'The fault of this antipathy is, without doubt, on

Radom's side. It was very rude of him, if he really liked you, not to pay your brother all the respect and attention which was his due; for, if Radom hoped for your hand, he should not have acted so toward Hermann, or your mother. Langenbach was sharper than the diplomatist, of whose cleverness I should have had a very poor opinion, had he not convinced us to the contrary regarding that business of mine. It was inexcusable in him to assume an attitude at once toward my son and your brother, which would infallibly lead to unpleasantness, especially where there was such a difference in dispositions."

My mother's words were full of truth; a truth which was so much more painful to me, because it menaced my happiness.

In the course of the day I sent Otto a few lines, urgently begged him to work against my brother's influence over my mother, and not to fail to call the next day.

Hermann and my mother must have talked over Radom's rude behavior; Hermann must have used it to advance his, or rather Langenbach's, aims, and my mother, forgetting the gratitude she owed Radom, was now completely prejudiced against him.

So I was surrounded by secret, hostile influences; by adverse motives, which, together with my mother's words, made me doubt if Radom could really have loved me so truly, for he had not sacrificed all things to his love.

My mother's well-known habit of keeping her decisions for days, yes, for weeks, to herself before she expressed them, or carried them out, troubled me. It was her custom to pretend to be indifferent, or to be considering, long after she had fully made up her mind.

When I left my mother's boudoir, without having obtained any satisfaction, I went to my room and burst into tears.

It was strange; it was not the thought of my brother's power over me, not the danger of seeing his will triumphant, that made me so unhappy; the doubts concerning Radom's love for me, which my mother had aroused, attacked my poor heart with such sudden and unconquerable force that I was powerless against them.

Radom's manner to me from the beginning loomed up in my memory; his indifference, his contempt, then the surprising change, his strange conduct toward Hermann, which seemed to me at times like fear or uncertainty, his suspense, his generally odd behavior—No, no, Radom had not been open with me! He, the shrewd diplomatist, may have discovered that I, notwithstanding his insults, was not angry with him; he may have taken advantage of this to——

I was terrified at the thought of perhaps having been made the plaything of a diplomatic whim. My pride was up in arms at the bare idea of this man having misused my heart!

And was it not more than probable? Could he not have paid me attention openly before all, attentions which I would have gladly returned as openly? What hindered him, in his position, from proposing to me as Chevreux had done, as others would have done, had they not been frightened off by Chevreux' fate; as Langenbach would have done, had he not foreseen that he would fail without my brother's support?

The evening passed miserably; my feelings were equally divided between wounded pride and a deep, true love; my brain weaved dark thoughts, my heart bled afresh each time that I thought of the possibility of having been deceived. In addition to that, I reproached myself and said it was my just punishment for deceiving my mother.

I did not see her any more that evening. I was alone in my room, for I had dismissed my maid early.

The evening was just fitted for anguish, for a storm was raging outside, dashing the snow against the windows, and whistling amongst the trees, so that I was almost afraid of myself.

Late at night, after tossing for hours upon my bed, which was to me as a bed of thorns, while I pictured myself disgraced, mocked at by society, which as yet knew nothing of my secret—late at night I wrestled with my thoughts and gained the victory.

Radom loved me just as dearly as I loved him, was the result of those stormy, changeful reflections, and I had innumerable small but weighty proofs of it. But our love had an enemy; it was that secret "something," a secret that Radom carefully hid from me, and therein lay the unnaturalness of our love, which, like all love, craved full, unreserved confidence. To him, only to him was it owing, as my mother had said, that our love was unhappy; but I—indeed, I was not any the less unhappy on that account!

There must be an explanation; very likely to-morrow, when Radom would come to ask my mother for my hand.

With this consolation, I fell asleep after midnight, only to awake with a heart filled with doubt and forebodings.

Early in the morning I received a note from Radom, through my maid whom I had let into the secret, counting upon the early sanction of my engagement to him.

He assured me that he would be with us at noon; he counted positively upon my mother's blessing, for she could not refuse him.

Those few lines were as a message from Heaven to my tired, aching heart. I hastily dressed myself and paid my morning visit to my mother.

She was, if not happier, at least calmer. She kissed me affectionately upon my brow, and chatted with me freely on indifferent subjects.

I soon noticed that she was watching me furtively. I expected the question why I looked so pale, and was prepared for it.

But she did not mention it, and I took special pains to hide my suspense.

I was startled to hear her say that as the weather was pleasanter she proposed paying some calls in town that afternoon.

If only Otto were prompt!

It would have been torment for me to wait another four and twenty hours for the decision of my fate, although this fate was not to be decided by me.

CHAPTER XVII.

I was very much agitated all the morning.

Sitting at the window in my room, I took up a book. But my thoughts wandered.

I read whole pages without knowing what I read. I took the morning paper and read that Captain von Langenbach had again been decorated by such and such a monarch with such and such an order.

Already the name of this man was sufficient to make me tremble. I hated him. His underhand way of screening himself behind my brother, inspired me with disgust.

Probably they had talked me over at their champagne, and Hermann had pledged his word to his intimate friend, in brotherly love had sworn to him that his sister

should become his wife, by virtue of the authority which his father's will had given him.

It was a knavish trick on the part of this man, for he knew that I had never given him the least encouragement.

What I had formerly heard of his heartlessness, of his unscrupulousness, had affected me but little; now it all returned to me, and filled me with loathing.

The queen desired this marriage. Probably only because Langenbach had informed her of his wishes through Princess Henrietta.

How came the queen to wish to exert such influence over my fate?

I shuddered at the thought that the day after to-morrow a *soirée*, to which we were invited, would take place in the queen's apartments.

Without doubt the queen would utilize this occasion to speak to my mother of her wishes, and my mother, who had once been such a clever, penetrating woman, now in her incomprehensible servility would give in to her wishes.

At this court upon which my father in his wounded pride had turned his back, she found in the queen, who had thwarted my father's plans by preferring some one inferior to him in intellect, an oracle; and always returned from court delighted with the grace and attention paid her by this haughty, unfeeling woman.

I knew the hour at which my mother had ordered the carriage. Every minute was an age to me, the hand of my watch crept along so slowly, while my pulse quickened tenfold.

Then I saw Radom's neat *coupé* drive up. I rose, hid behind the curtains and saw him descend.

Several minutes passed. I listened anxiously.

Otto did not return at once to his coupé, so my mother must have received him.

In the small salon down stairs they were deciding my fate. Deciding? By no means! Although my heart beat wildly, and my pulse was irregular, I had the courage to repeat my unalterable will.

As I stood at the window in feverish agitation, incapable of moving, our carriage also drove up. The two coachmen conversed from their boxes. My heart grew more fearful.

A sound in the next room startled me. Hastily, and with trembling limbs, I stepped back into the room. They were surely coming to summon me.

All was still. It was my maid who had some work to do in the next room. I could have burst into tears at this disappointment.

Then I suddenly heard a carriage door shut. It was Otto's coupé which rolled off.

And I had missed seeing him! Possibly I might have gathered from his face, had I caught a glimpse of it, what kind of answer he had received.

Completely exhausted, I threw myself upon a sofa and buried my face in my hands.

At any rate my mother would now send for me.

Some time passed. Again a carriage rolled away.

I sprang up, I rushed to the window. It was my mother's carriage. She was going to town to make purchases and pay calls. In a few hours she returned.

I had forced myself to a certain degree of composure—a composure which inspired me with the firm resolution not to become the slave of another's will, happen what might.

So I succeeded, upon my mother's return, in meeting her, to all appearances, self-possessed.

She, too, seemed more composed. She told me about her calls, and showed me some of her purchases. Then she sank upon a sofa and began:

"Apropos, Paula, Baron von Radom was here this morning and came for no less a purpose than to propose for my daughter's hand."

My heart almost stood still; I felt the color leave my face. I was not able to utter a word, and remained in such a position that my mother could not perceive my pallor.

"Did you hear what I said, Paula?" she repeated. "It concerned you!"

"Yes!" I managed to gasp. "I expected it!" I added, softly.

"I told Herr von Radom that his proposal flattered me, and that I had expected it—but think, Paula," interrupting herself. "Radom seemed to assume that you would not reject him. How could he do so?"

My mother's voice sounded so cold and heartless that my courage revived.

"He did so, mother," replied I, turning to her, "because he knows that he is the only man that I truly esteem and—love!"

"I thought so," was my mother's quiet answer, "for you have not left me in doubt of it."

"Then, mother, do not keep me in doubt as to the answer you gave him!" I cried out.

"I told him exactly what could be said under the circumstances—that I must leave the decision to my son as head of the house, at the same time reproving him for his rude behavior toward Hermann."

Being unable to remain standing, I sank into a chair, and stared before me.

My mother was probably startled at my pallor.

"For that reason I begged for several weeks' time, to which he willingly agreed. I must confess," she added, in a peculiar tone, "it gave me some satisfaction to make him feel his lack of civility toward Hermann."

I scarcely heard the latter part of what she said and attached no importance to it, for how could a mother think of such trifles when her own daughter's happiness was at stake.

At any rate, no pains had been spared to set her against Radom. The lack of respect, yes, of subjection, which was her son's due, was an insult to her, and she gladly seized the opportunity to punish it.

Of how little value was her daughter's happiness, in the eyes of my mother, compared to her son's wounded pride, for whose sake the former had always been sacrificed. Her son's injured vanity and her daughter's happiness!

With what tender love had I clung to my mother since my childhood. Between us there had always been that close, companionable intercourse, which had made her the confidant of all that passed within me. She had been my counselor, my protector, to whom I always looked up, and never between mother and daughter had there existed a more affectionate bond.

My brother's coarse, overbearing nature had driven her to me.

But since we had left the castle, indeed, since our arrival at the Residence, a complete change had taken place in my mother. She became more worldly; she did not find employment and amusement in her home, as she had often done during my father's life-time.

She was only happy when she could display her knowledge in the salons, and could converse with certain men. She did not interest herself so gladly and so

entirely in me, though I tried to be to her what I should be.

I noticed this change at first with sadness. It pained me that her affections should grow cold; that my love would no more find that cheerful, sympathetic mother's heart.

She had only grieved at the separation from her son, and now that he was with her again, she overwhelmed him with tenderness, which he did not value, but rather abused, while her daughter was being moved out of her heart altogether.

"Do not let us speak of this any more to-day!" my mother continued, as she saw what an effect her harsh, unsympathetic words had made upon me. "The dress-maker will be here in half an hour; we have much still to arrange for the soirée to-morrow at the castle!"

My mother arose to examine the materials which her maid had spread out, threw them carelessly aside one after another, and went to her room.

With a shudder I looked after her, on whose breast I had once wept away my childish sorrows, and found my joy.

Until to-day I had never given her any trouble, opposed her will, or expressed a wish which would require her to sacrifice herself for me, and now when she saw that she could make her only daughter happy, now she was harsh and unsympathetic, subordinating herself to a will whose sordid motives she was forced to admit.

From that day, I, too, was changed.

I awoke to a feeling of self-dependence, which my brother's commands and my mother's thoughtless compliance occasioned.

Radom, I told myself, was right.

My brother's unbounded, ill-natured selfishness; his

boastfulness, his scorn of true worth, must call forth, in such a man as he, disgust and aversion which he was too proud, too independent, to conceal. They could force me to give him up, but to marry another—never!

The next evening my mother attended the queen's *soirée* alone.

I was ill and miserable. I felt a mental and physical exhaustion which I attributed to relaxation after the strain upon my nerves, to which probably many sleepless nights contributed their share.

I might have forced myself, pale and weary as I was, to go, but I dreaded even the thought of that *soirée*, and our physician prescribed rest.

My mother returned sooner than I expected. I heard the carriage stop before our door, and then a noise in the lower part of the house.

To my astonishment my mother entered my room and approached my bed.

She was very animated, and as I gazed at her in her negligee I thought she was still a beautiful woman; a remark which I had often heard from others, but which I had never paid much attention to.

With some affection she bent over me and took my hand. Involuntarily I felt a chill creep over me as she kissed my brow.

My mother was in the mood to talk about the *soirée*. She was very lively and well-satisfied with the course events had taken, and informed me of the general regret at my absence.

She again spoke of the queen's especial attention, said that she had conversed with her a long time, and had inquired for me.

She then told me who was present, of the *toilets* of the young ladies with whom I was acquainted, of Chev-

reux, who had a new perfume made from flowers that came from Juan Fernandez, and of many others, and when she perceived that I was very little interested, she left me to seek repose.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Both of us felt oppressed and miserable at home. I had been obliged to promise my mother not to see Otto von Radom. She had wrung this promise from me by referring to the proprieties, without leaving me any comfort, any hope.

Otto had not attended the queen's soirée either. He announced that to me in a note, which my maid handed to me the next morning.

His lines gave me very little comfort. They showed that he was very despondent, although he assured me that he hoped everything from such an affectionate mother.

Otto did not know her as I had lately learned to know her, and from my mother's manner I had cause to expect anything but encouragement. She was more cheerful and talkative than formerly; she was kind to me, but betrayed no sympathy for me, though she could see how low-spirited I was.

Radom I was not allowed to see, whereas Langenbach called upon us the day after the soirée.

When he was announced I rose quickly, and was about to leave the room, but a severe, displeased look from my mother commanded me to remain.

Langenbach was arrayed in his full uniform. He was very inoffensive, and pretended that he was anxious to find out how I was.

My manner toward him was polite, but distant. I, too,

wished to appear as if nothing had happened. I took part in the conversation, conquering the loathing I felt for that *roué*.

He told us of a "magnificent" hunting-party which Hermann had given, and of the supper which followed.

Each of his words was an apotheosis of my brother, with which he sought to ingratiate himself with my mother, while I could perceive the "toady" in his every word.

Just such young men as Langenbach were my brother's ruin. All sang his praises, all revelled in his liberality, which so willingly helped along flattering idlers, but as I had often noticed, chased the truly poor and needy with kicks from the threshold.

I despised this light, pleasure-seeking company of parasites, whom I had seen so many times at my father's table; but I knew that at the Residence the swarm of young and old men, who surrounded my brother with their flattery, consisted for the most part of morally ruined individuals, whose inner corruption was covered by an illustrious name, and whose routine in the path of vice could be only fatal to my brother at his immature age.

He only cared for those who fell at his feet; to him flattery was a lawful tribute, which he required from all, and he who at the same time indulged his inordinate longing after enjoyment, was the most welcome to him.

Perhaps I judged Langenbach more severely than he really deserved, at any rate, his was, on account of his selfish interests, a servile nature, and that I should be the reward of his servility, capped the climax.

Langenbach may not have seen through the part which I played.

He seemed very happy; he tried as usual to make the most favorable impression upon me, and when he, with the consciousness of having so impressed me, attempted

to kiss my hand upon leaving, I felt as if I must awaken him from his delusion, and prevented this gallantry by a hasty movement.

* * * * *

While nothing was being said about my fate, and I could not even correspond secretly with Otto von Radom because some official matters had taken him from home, we received an invitation to the wedding of the banker's daughter and Carlsburg.

As the bride's father managed my mother's financial affairs, she thought it her duty to accept.

"I shall not go, mother!" said I, in answer to her question. "It would be against my principles to attend this wedding. It would be unfeeling toward poor Marie, who, since she heard of the engagement, has gone about like a shadow. This Carlsburg must be an unconscionable adventurer."

"H'm, he is no different from other young men who have the chance to gain a position! His family is poor, and his bride will receive a dowry of half a million. That is the way of the world."

"At any rate it was cruel, almost criminal to feign a love for the poor girl which he could never have entertained for her. As a poor lieutenant he must have known that he could never marry her, for, at her father's death, Marie's small income was confiscated, which now, thank Heaven, she has again received."

"She might have known it herself, and have rejected his advances. It is very foolish for a poor girl to receive attention from a young man who has no prospects."

"You condemn the heart, mother, which is a girl's most beautiful and noblest ornament."

"The heart! Where is the heart, when want and misery

fill it with care, sorrow, and doubt. There is no room in our world for the heart's fantasies since we have become so fashionable; and this Carlsburg, who must be a good financier, for he gained his reputation so quickly as a merchant, evidently looked upon his relations with this credulous girl as a flirtation which of course would come to nothing. I am sorry for her," my mother added, but her voice grew stern; "still she can thank herself for it."

What my mother had said was doubtlessly aimed at me. I felt a bitterness which I could not entirely suppress.

"I remember that my mother once spoke differently to me," said I slowly and emphatically. "The heart's purity and truth, and clearness of understanding are the conditions and aims of all careful training," said she to me.

"And so she says to-day, if you would only understand her," was the rebuking answer. "All training without purity will fail; it is the heart's duty to guide the understanding toward good, without trying to master it. The understanding, if cultivated to its utmost, is incalculable in its egotism, and what the heart can take from it for the benefit of others, without detriment to itself, will be the result of an education in accordance with the spirit of the age. The heart can only serve as the regulator of this immeasurable egotism."

I saw from the nature of her talk that my mother would make no concessions. She was very abrupt in the expression of her principles, and could prove to me to a hair's breadth, that her former ideas coincided entirely with her present ones, but that I had mistaken them.

I thought I recognized in her words my father's maxims; that same lofty, finely clothed egotism, which in my brother became harsh and disgusting.

The gentle, affectionate nature of my mother, and her charming way of expressing herself, concealed the nucleus of that same egotism, which, by my father's example had been germinated in her mind, and which, in loving memory of the dead, had been cultivated by a careful hand. Therefore that complete harmony with her son; therefore, too, the indulgent, almost approving view of his insolent, overbearing worship of self. That gave me the key to one of her recently-made remarks, when I once said that Hermann's wild life inspired me with horror, and must effect every refined nature the same.

"It does not become us women," said she, "to criticise the life of a courtier, for our minds are narrow, and we can only base our opinions on the laws of a woman's world, which are not respected by men. Hermann, as a prototype of a young, handsome, and gallant heir to an enormous fortune, has the right to make the most of those gifts, indifferent to the opinion of those who are less favored by Providence and fortune than he—without regard to those who foolishly put themselves in his way. If there is one duty which he has to perform, it is that of distinguishing himself by means of his advantages, before those who are his equals. One can not be a gallant without abusing, in some measure, one's privileges. The flight of the eagle is controlled by the strength of his wings, while the inferior order of birds can not venture out of the lower atmosphere. So it would be absurd for us women to attach the slightest importance to the comments of the middle class upon the mode of life of a young man like Hermann, for they like to slander what is incomprehensible to their domestic minds, and revenge themselves thus upon those above them."

I, however, succeeded in carrying my purpose, and my mother also found some pretext for not attending the very magnificently-celebrated nuptials of Carlsburg.

Since Marie had left us, I had only seen her twice, and then only when I went to inquire after her health.

Carlsburg's infidelity seemed really to have totally upset the poor girl. It is true she smiled sadly when I told her of my joy at the restoration of her mother's small income, and of her father's good name, which had been announced in all the newspapers; but I saw that she took no pleasure in what I said. Her interest in life was gone, her thoughts were busy with her fate, and these were embittered by the stir which the wedding occasioned in the town.

I had grave fears for the poor girl's life when I paid her my last visit.

She was pale and weak. Her complexion was almost transparent, and in her lovely eyes there was a kind of glorification which put me in mind of heaven.

Her mother, who knew of her love, was very much grieved; her daughter's misfortune destroyed all the pleasure she would have taken in her restored fortune.

She only spoke of it as at least lightening her poor daughter's burden, for Marie would not now have to worry about their living, would not have to work hard all night, from which, formerly, nothing could keep her.

But Marie's inactivity evidently only served to turn her thoughts upon her trouble. She was obliged to do nothing, for her health was broken; it was impossible for her to work.

The sight of these two was a great trial to me. The mother, so nervous, that when she laid aside her knitting her hands would move convulsively until she again took up her work and employed her fingers; the daugh-

ter, pale, low-spirited, weary of an existence which in its earlier stages had been made miserable by the scorn and disgrace heaped upon her innocent father, which later had made of her a slave to her needle, a sufferer from poverty and want, and finally had turned her one hope, her love, into the meanest perfidy. Even the affection which Marie had usually shown me, had vanished. She was apathetic, indifferent; her smile was forced, her voice was weak and faint. As she gave me her hand it lay almost lifeless in mine, and when she went with me to the stairs, she said to me that she felt as if this would be the last time that she should see me.

Little did I dream that she spoke the truth. The morning after Carlsburg's marriage my maid came to my bed-side very early, told me not to be frightened, and said, breathlessly, that Marie had been found in the court-yard of her dwelling, crushed to pieces. The unfortunate girl, in a fit of temporary insanity, had thrown herself out of the window, when her mother thought her asleep in her little room, whence she had retired early, somewhat livelier and more natural in her manner, after saying affectionately, "Good-night, I wish to rest!"

That legacy of all Mary's! The prophecy of her aunt, which she had related to me with a sad smile. That occurred to me as my maid, pale and agitated, brought me the news.

Marie could only have committed such a deed while out of her mind; for her devotion to her mother, to whom the deed would be a death-blow, had she been sane, would have prompted her to suffer and perhaps in time to forget.

This occurrence shocked me very much. I dressed myself hastily. I hurried to my mother, who had already heard the news, and shook her head silently.

A short while since she had spoken so indifferently, so unsympathetically of the unhappy girl's simplicity, of her "clinging to a man" who could promise her nothing in the future, but now in the face of this tragic end, she did not dare to introduce her heartless remarks.

Marie was sacrificed, and Carlsburg, I heard in the course of the day, had gone on a journey with his young wife. Perhaps he had not even heard of Marie's terrible death, and if he had?—

No one judged him, the murderer, and with the greatest comfort he, the once poor lieutenant, now the fortunate merchant, would enjoy the millions which he had gained by his lucky speculations—that is, his marriage with the banker's plain daughter.

Perhaps if she were to hear of Marie's death, she would only have a pitying smile for her; for Marie was poor and had the fate of poverty—she had a heart!

Golgotha! How many have preceded her on that narrow way, and how many will follow her—to Golgotha!

I reproached myself for not having thought more of Marie lately, for having forgotten her sorrow in my own.

Did I know what was before me? was not my fate to be decided, and was not the time approaching all too quickly? for "my mind presaged me ill."

Eugenie, too, I had forgotten.

For eight days I had heard nothing of her. I had succeeded in obtaining a lodging for her with a family, until she should recover. From there she could visit her child daily, and there was a possibility of her finding a position as governess in some institute in which she could teach French.

She might be vexed with me; poor, deserted girl, for she did not know what I had been through in the meantime.

She was too proud to accept any help from me.

The proceeds from the sale of her jewels, which I had bought back in order to return them to her, would not long keep her child and her from want; something must be done for her, and without the knowledge of my mother, who, as yet had no idea of her presence in town.

Only when she had succeeded in obtaining a good situation in town or out of it, should she hear of the poor girl's adversities and flight; yes, it would give me satisfaction to tell her myself as soon as Eugenie was provided for.

CHAPTER XIX.

The next forenoon my cab stopped before the house in which my protégée had found a lodging.

I had left home under the pretense of shopping in town, and had stolen half an hour in which to visit Eugenie.

Still reproaching myself for not having seen the miserable girl sooner, I ascended the steps and entered the widow's modest dwelling.

She came toward me timidly, and recognizing me clasped her hands entreatingly.

I foresaw some new misfortune.

My tongue was paralyzed so that I could scarcely inquire for Eugenie.

"She has gone! Oh, the terrible scandal!" cried the woman, wringing her hands and sinking upon a chair, from which she had risen upon my entrance.

"Gone! How is that possible? Where? Speak!"

"Gone, and with a scandal which will make me the laughing-stock of the whole neighborhood!" repeated the woman.

"A scandal? I do not understand you!"

"The police came after her. She was sent home, escorted by a policeman, who took her belongings, too, was taken to the station just as she was and went. She was represented to me as a widow; how was I to suspect that I had taken in a person who had run away from her husband, and taken valuables belonging to him? Who will now pay me what she owes? I may consider myself lucky if they do me no harm for falsely representing her as a widow."

"Do not trouble yourself, my good woman; you shall be compensated by me," said I, in a voice which still trembled. "But tell me clearly what happened, and what has become of her child."

"Of her child? That is of no consequence. The poor little thing is probably with its nurse. Ah! I almost forgot. She asked the officer for a few minutes' grace in which to write a few lines to a lady. There lays the letter; do you know the lady to whom it is addressed?"

I took up the letter and held it in my trembling hand in order to read the superscription, which was written in pencil.

"It is addressed to me."

"Ah! you are the Countess von M.?" cried the woman, astonished, and rising respectfully, for I had never mentioned my name to her.

Without replying, I opened the letter.

Eugenie had written it hurriedly in French:

"I am the victim of a fresh act of violence. I have been arrested and shall be taken back to S. to be given over to justice, nominally, because I have left my husband and have stolen articles of value from him. I am accused of having taken money which was intrusted to my husband.

"Before God I swear that I am innocent; that I only took with me, to save myself and my child for a time

from want, those trinkets, which were given me by you.

"I must submit; must let them do with me what they will. But I shall find an opportunity, countess, to inform you of my fate.

"Protect my child, and I will bear what is decreed. God will not desert me.

"Oh! had I only followed my first prompting, and returned to France! I have had no happiness in this strange land in which I thought to find a second home.
"Eugenie."

In no way satisfied I put the letter in my pocket, handed the woman twice as much as was owing to her, assured myself that the officer had taken all of her belongings, and left the house with the assurance that Eugenie was innocent, and that I should exert every means to protect her from unjust accusations.

Greatly agitated, I returned home.

Eugenie a thief—it was impossible!

I myself had the trinkets, which I had redeemed, intending to surprise her by returning them to her. I knew them all; we had given them to her on her different birthdays.

Did this accusation come from the husband she had been forced to marry?

It was not very likely, for he who had mistreated her, had put her out of the house, must be glad that she had left him, so that he was relieved from the expense incurred by her and the child.

But who could it have been?

That was what puzzled me.

I pictured to myself Eugenie dragged away as a thief, and I not able to help her.

I might have called upon Radom, but that, too, was impossible.

There was nothing for me to do but to leave Eugenie to her fate, and in the meantime to care for her child.

Upon my way home I saw, in a street near our house, a crowd of people before the house in which poor Marie's mother lived, and when I arrived home, I was met with the news that the clergyman had refused to bury Marie because she had taken her life.

Until it had been decided, the coffin was to be placed in a vault. The people in that quarter took up the matter so energetically, however, that they carried out their will. What a world!

The girl who was deceived, was denied a decent burial, while her murderer, now a wealthy man, was rising, in the eyes of the world, to still higher honors!

The next day I thought of a way of helping Eugenie. I would write to my mother's solicitor, who lived in a town near our castle, before whom, probably, she would be taken. I would ask him to interest himself in her, but in such a way that my mother should not learn of my intervention.

I was unlucky with my protégées. But was not I unlucky, too?

The time had passed, and my fate was to be decided. Radom had returned, and described to me in a note the anxiety which had oppressed him on the way. He could not wait another hour; he must learn his fate.

I comforted him with a few lines, and spoke to him of a hope which I did not possess, for my mother's manner promised nothing good. I felt that she wished to prepare me for the inevitable.

Even my maid added to my fears. Without knowing what it related to, she told me that, while my mother's maid was ill, she had helped my mother at her toilet, and once she had unconsciously uttered her thoughts aloud: "I am sorry, but I can not help it."

When I, one bright winter's day, returned from the church-yard, where I had had Marie's grave planted with evergreens, which in the spring were to be changed for flowers, my brother was with my mother, and with him was—Langenbach.

Very much disturbed upon hearing of the presence of these two, I flew to my room, determined to lock myself in, and not to open the door, even if my mother demanded it.

Not dreaming that Langenbach had come with my brother to thank my mother for her gracious consent, there was a weight upon my breast. I do not know what possessed me, but when I saw Hermann and Langenbach enter the former's carriage and drive away, I laughed aloud.

I remembered how Hermann had caused the defenseless Eugenie to be dragged to the altar, and that my mother had saved her from that dreadful act of violence; but now she could allow him to force his own sister into the arms of a roué! I would rather follow Marie's example, and throw myself out of the window!

I was seized with a frenzy which was probably called forth by the danger which threatened me. I was not even frightened when someone knocked at my door, when my maid called to me that my mother desired to speak to me.

Resolutely I stepped to the door, opened it, descended the stairs to the small salon in which my mother was awaiting me, the same room in which she usually received her visitors.

Without doubt she had something of importance to tell me. She was sitting at the window. Without looking at me, she pointed to an easy-chair opposite her.

"I have something to say to you, Paula." Her voice was firm and steady.

Silently I drew back the fauteuil and seated myself. My mother beat a tattoo upon the window.

"Langenbach was just here with Hermann," she began, looking into the street to avoid my gaze.

"I saw them drive away."

"Can you imagine why Langenbach was here?"

"No," was my cold reply.

"He has just received my consent. Hermann pressed for a decision."

"And does Hermann think that I shall give my consent, or does Herr von Langenbach think so?"

My mother looked at me reprovingly.

"You will do what we consider best for you," said she, abruptly and severely.

"And what if I propose to obey the dictates of my own heart, and not Hermann's orders, which he issues so imperiously, and against which I rebel? Did I not know, mother, that Hermann has planned and willed that I should be given to the companion of his debauchery? Did I not know that he has abused your weakness in order to give me to a man whom I despise for his scheming? Did I know that it was your own wish, I would beseech you, my mother, to grant that which is for my happiness, and I would move your heart. I would implore you, until you consented for me to give my hand to the man whom I love with my whole heart, who alone is worthy of me! But it is only your submission to Hermann's will that is going to cause my misery! You say that Hermann, as a cavalier, is not to be compared with the generality. I do not dispute that; but the husband to whom I shall be given, will be the man to whom I shall belong until death, and he must be above reproach. My feelings tell me that this Langenbach is not worthy to tie the shoe-strings of the man whom only I can and will marry!"

At these last words tears filled my eyes. The feeling of bitter, most atrocious injustice of which I was to be made a victim, the thought that a mother could show so little pity for a daughter, threatened to overcome me.

"You misjudge me, my child," said my mother in a softer tone, "I knew very well that you loved Herr von Radom. I told Hermann so. But he flew into a passion; he swore to me that Radom should not even touch his sister's hand; that sooner than have such a thing happen, he would shoot him like a dog. He said that no one but Langenbach should become your husband, for he had given his word of honor, which, given by a Count von M., was inviolable."

"Count von M. may give his word in matters which concern him," cried I, drying my tears and rising hastily and proudly, "but *my* word, not his, has to do with this."

"But I, too, my child, am pledged," said my mother, soothingly, "and not only to the queen, who takes a great interest in this match, but to Langenbach himself; I can not withdraw any more than Hermann."

I formed a final resolution; like the hunted game which makes its last, desperate leap, I threw myself at my mother's feet; I clung to her knees, I implored her for pity, for mercy, and sobbed aloud, burying my face in her lap.

She laid her hand caressingly upon my head. She argued with me; but what she called "reasoning," only augmented my despair.

She talked to me a long time. Her voice was soft and melodious, but what it said was far from affectionate. It was to this effect: that she could not help herself, this engagement had already been as good as announced by the queen at court; that between Hermann and Radom there existed an unconquerable dislike which might lead

to the worst results; that I was unjust to Langenbach; that she thought him a kind-hearted, well-principled man in whom I was mistaken, because, like all young men of position, he was a *bon vivant*, whose one desire was to make me happy and renounce his fast life; finally that she, counting upon my submission, had given him full permission to speak to me on the morrow, though he would probably inform the princes and princesses of his good fortune that same day, and that she had thought it necessary to advise the Baron von Radom of it, as well, in a few polite lines.

Of what my mother said, I had only a general idea. My thoughts grew confused when she mentioned Radom's name, and I was carried to my room almost unconscious.

CHAPTER XX.

The news of my engagement to Captain von Langenbach was soon circulated about the town, and it was said that it would be made public as soon as I had recovered from an illness which I had contracted from a cold.

Langenbach received his friends' congratulations with a happy smile, while Marquis de Chevreux sought in vain for an essence that would prevent the fainting fits which attacked him daily.

The thought of being superseded by Langenbach affected the poor marquis so deeply that he even forgot to apply his cosmetics every morning to his face, upon which sorrow had left more furrows than time.

Eight days after our supposed engagement, he had asked for a furlough, so as not to meet the mischievous glances of his acquaintances, who maintained that he still cherished secret hopes.

Something in the report was true, for I was confined to my bed for eight days with nervous prostration, and if I speak of Chevreux here, notwithstanding my mood, it is because I am often ironical.

My mother nursed me attentively, but her lips never uttered any words of comfort, which alone would have helped me to recover.

The doctor visited me twice a day, and assured us that my strong constitution would pull me through.

Very likely he had told my mother this at the beginning. As I heard later, she had been very much worried; she could not rest; she took the greatest care not to provoke one of her attacks, and indeed, watched by my bed-side until late at night, when my condition seemed serious.

The thought of Radom was always in my mind, in my delirium, and it must often have pained my mother, when I broke into sobs and prayed for death, so that my excitement got the better of the doctor's exertions, and one relapse followed another.

My maid tried all in her power to comfort me, but with all her good intentions, she had the opposite effect upon me.

She daily brought me a few lines from Otto. I would press them secretly to my lips, hide and re-read them when I was alone.

Of course this increased my excitement, and I only felt somewhat calmer when I had written a few words in pencil upon a paper in which I vowed again and again that I would only belong to him.

My constitution gained the victory.

After fourteen days I was able to leave my bed for hours, and my confidante thought she could give me, without any risk, some letters which the servant, who

always received the mail from the postman, had given her for me.

Pale and enervated, I sat in my easy-chair, a mere shadow of what I had formerly been; discouraged and disconsolate, in spite of my determination, in spite of my intention to face all that they inflicted upon me.

My hands trembled; I looked down upon them with a sad smile.

My heart beat so feebly and my limbs felt so numb that I could scarcely stand upright.

Two of the letters were unimportant.

The third bore upon the envelope the printed name of my mother's lawyer at S.

News of Eugenie, of whom I had thought so little during my illness, but whose fate was now doubly interesting to me.

It was a thick letter.

I first drew out a paper which looked like a register, and covered four pages.

My mother must not see it. So I was careful to quickly conceal the large sheets, in case I should be surprised.

The lawyer, a kind old man, had inclosed in this paper a note written by himself, in which he informed me that my protégée had been taken before the magistrate; he had been admitted to her at once, as I had requested him to defend her.

The enclosed papers contained her deposition, which was to me a very unexpected, surprising disclosure.

As Eugenie had waited eight days in vain for my visit, she confessed to the attorney, she was seized with the fear that the little ready-money, which paid for her child's support, would soon be exhausted, and that she would be without means.

She had therefore decided to advertise in the news-

paper in French for a position as companion or governess.

To this advertisement there had only been one answer. The lady gave no name, stated that she wanted a French companion, and asked her to call at her house at a certain hour upon a certain day.

Delighted with the prospect of obtaining employment, Eugenie had repaired to the house, where she was received by a handsome, elegantly-attired young lady, whom she, to her astonishment, at once recognized.

This lady was the same, whom Eugenie, upon her return to the Count von M.'s castle, had been obliged to serve as maid.

This lady, whose name no one at the castle had known, had, accompanied by her mother, paid a week's visit to my brother. They thought at the castle that she was a Frenchwoman; but Eugenie knew her to be a German, learned that the young count had made her acquaintance at Baden-Baden, and that he, as Eugenie had discovered from a letter found in one of her dresses, had invited her most cordially to visit him.

As the envelope was missing, Eugenie did not know to whom it was addressed.

The lovely lady had also recognized Eugenie at once. However, she collected herself and acted as if Eugenie were a perfect stranger to her.

After a few short questions she dismissed her, with the promise that she would send her word the next day.

Eugenie, when she left the lady, very much disappointed, and fearing that she would not obtain employment, looked for a door-plate or some means of finding out the name, but in vain; neither had she met any one in the house whom she might have asked.

It was not likely, she told herself, that this lady would

feel inclined to take a companion who had been a witness of her behavior when visiting the Count von M., who had seen her walking by the side of this cavalier, giving vent to her exuberant spirits, knowing herself to be free from all social restraint; submitting to the idyllic charm which she found in the young count's company, with so much gaiety.

In vain Eugenie next day awaited the promised answer. The second day, when she was just about to take new measures for obtaining a situation, a police officer appeared, charged her with deserting her husband and with theft, and that same evening took her to S., where she was placed under arrest.

The letter was ten days old. The advocate added that he hoped to deliver my protégée from the hands of the law if nothing was found amongst her possessions that would implicate her. Unfortunately the accusation against her had come from the trustee of the castle, in consequence of the schoolmaster's, her husband's, denunciation, who charged her with having stolen fifty guildens belonging to the parish.

This accusation had been entered against her some time. The young Count von M. was one of the witnesses, and now the question was if the accused was innocent, of which he, the lawyer, was entirely convinced.

* * * * *

So the unfortunate girl, who had had so many trials, was not to be spared this! The suspicion of being a thief was to be attached to her by her tormentor, probably to throw off suspicion which might be directed against him, the truly guilty one!

My confidence in Eugenie's innocence and the lawyer's powers comforted me in some measure, although I was grieved at the suffering the poor girl had to bear.

But that same evening my hope, my trust, was to be destroyed.

Again there came a letter from the lawyer, which, with a cry of anguish, I dropped from my hand.

The lawyer informed me that, upon searching Eugenie's effects, they had found the silver tinderbox belonging to the murdered forester.

It had been identified by his family. There was no doubt about this *corpus delicti*, for upon it was engraved the murdered man's name.

At her examination Eugenie had appeared very much embarrassed and confused; but she, however, asserted that she had found the box while walking in the woods.

This circumstance, he said, was very suspicious.

The box, which was known to have been in the man's pocket when he was shot, had been most carefully sought in the woods, and on the scene of the crime. It could, therefore, only have been taken before, directly after, or at the time of the deed.

The accused had undoubtedly been there before the body was found and taken away. If she were innocent, if the supposition was not true that she had an understanding with the still unknown murderer, she would have, when she found this object, given it up, for the murdered man's name was familiar to her; that she had concealed it was an evidence either of her accomplicity or of theft.

The letter closed with the remark that the man whom they had taken into custody, they had set free, and were unaware of his whereabouts, but were searching for him, in order to confront him with the suspected girl.

They expected important disclosures from this man, for it was known in the village that the prisoner had

often carried food and money to his family after he was arrested.

I should hear more as soon as the trial was in progress.

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I was beside myself. Eugenie suspected of participation in a murder! Eugenie in possession of that article which had been so carefully and vainly sought! Eugenie; such a gentle, innocent creature, connected with that murder!

Although I, slowly convalescing, was in no condition to think coherently, I made an effort to recall all the facts of that terrible affair.

Had not Eugenie's timid, or rather, terror-stricken manner, her uneasiness, her nervousness, then struck me?

Was she not directly after the murder seized with a kind of feverish ague?

Did she not attempt to leave the room whenever the crime was mentioned?

Did not the slightest sound startle her? Did she not cry out when she stood at the window and saw the man led away by the *gens-d'armes*?

And—an hour afterward did she not take the miserable man's wife a sum of money which she could not possibly have saved up, while she told me that she had only given her a trifle, and at the same time besought me to interest my mother in them, so that the unhappy woman and her child should not starve?

And that evening, when I came upon her asleep in her American rocking-chair, did she not mutter strange words, and appear startled and confused when, upon waking, she saw me before her—and did not I ascribe it all to her attempt at suicide, to her leap into the sea, and think it only natural that it should affect her mind.

What horrible secret was at the bottom of all this?

Eugenie, I was certain, was not capable of theft, much less of a crime. She was too child-like, too pure, too original in her naïve thoughts and feelings.

She had never been able to inflict pain upon others, and would always much rather suffer herself than harm another.

At that time—I now looking back upon it saw clearer than I did then—the first change took place in her. But that was so easily accounted for, for from that time her troubles commenced. From that time Eugenie was the prey, the butt of adversities, which chased away all innocence of her childish heart.

My mother may have been right when she laid all the blame to her, at any rate the greater part of it fell upon her—but how was it possible that she could be even remotely connected with this crime. What justified her excessive sympathy for that abandoned man?

She had told me—I still remembered her very words—that she could not hear that bloody deed spoken of without a shudder, and I had always felt the same, anxious and uneasy. But at the same time she had the courage, which I had not, to seek out the man's family, while all the villagers were fleeing from them as from a pestilence.

I then admired her for her humanity, and others joined me in that admiration, and now—now came this elucidation, or rather obscurity, which was striving for the light.

Vainly did I rack my brain after the receipt of that letter, to think of anything in Eugenie's manner after our departure from the castle, that had the faintest reference to this misdeed.

Eugenie had certainly changed very much and to such a degree, that I, for the first time, had occasion to find

fault with her. She was possessed by a love for my brother, which she looked upon as a sin against herself. She saw in herself the victim of a young man who despised all humane feelings. She had become such by the joint influence of her fear of him and her weakness for him.

She, an orphan in a strange land, was entirely dependent upon my mother's bounty; she saw that the latter trembled before her son, and she did not dare, intimidated by his threats, to make any complaints to her; so she suffered, she bore with his rudeness, was silently the object of his persecution and cruelty. Finally she sought relief in suicide, but was brought back to life.

From that time she had been changed.

Keen as her perception had always been, she must have felt that my mother had learned of the ill-nature which Hermann in almost boyish petulance had vented upon her, the defenseless girl. My mother was too proud for Eugenie to dare, unasked, to breathe a word in her justification. She also gathered from my mother's manner, which grew more and more abrupt and commanding, that her mistress who had been so kind and good to her in her childhood, and to whom she was truly grateful, looked upon her as the guilty one, that her opinion was that Eugenie had dared to raise her eyes to her son; so the relations between the two had become strained, and Eugenie sought to break the tie altogether, for her feelings were hurt at being judged unjustly.

Her heart was filled with defiance, and yet with gratitude for all the kindness we had shown her, and she rushed out into the world into the arms of her tormentor, who degraded her to the position of maid to a stranger and then——

Who was this stranger? This question crossed my

mind. She must have had something to do with Eugenie's arrest, had evidently been the cause of it.

She must belong to a class of society which commanded her to keep her distance from a person whose indiscretion she might fear. She must still sustain relations with my brother, and at her wish, only to save her in the eyes of the world and from the consequences of her frivolity, which perhaps had only been a youthful indiscretion, he had not hesitated to deliver up the girl, whom he had already made so miserable, to an ignoble fate.

He, who had troubled himself so little, I might say, not at all about his large estates, lowered himself to accomplish the speedy ruin of a poor creature who, by her marriage, had become his subject!

What could I do to help Eugenie!

I forgot my own sorrow in thinking of hers. I would write the lawyer that I was fully convinced of Eugenie's innocence. But of what avail would that be?

The lawyer wrote that she maintained that she had found the fatal object and had not noticed the name engraved upon it, at least it had not occurred to her that it was that of the murdered man.

That scarcely seemed credible to me. I knew that Eugenie had known the young man, knew that she had often visited the forester's daughter, and knew also that she was present when we heard that they had looked in vain for the silver tinder-box.

And she declared that she had never heard anything about it! Eugenie had told a falsehood!

Of course, that perplexed me, still I felt positive that Eugenie was innocent.

CHAPTER XXI.

Several days had elapsed. I had left the sick-room.

Although I took little interest in the outer world, I sat in my mother's room and looked at the golden prisms on the sea.

I felt as cold and dead as it looked outside; only the sun was wanting which was shining so magnificently on the world.

And yet, since morning a beam lit up my soul. I must see Radom and speak with him. The gloom about me, the silence at my fate, had become unbearable. His letters did not suffice me; I longed for him.

That evening I should see him. My mother was going to the Opera, after having spent several weeks at home with me. Her maid had permission to go out, while her mistress was absent, the man-servant was ill, and Radom could visit me unseen.

For the first time I ventured upon a rendezvous, the culpability of which I was aware of. But no regard for the proprieties, no fear of doing wrong, no apprehension of any kind, should hinder me.

Since my recovery my mother had been graver; she spoke little, and had thoughts which disturbed her. She was much distressed, but sought to hide it.

Perhaps her maternal love was struggling with the other influences which had been brought to bear upon her and prevented her deciding, or perhaps she was conscious of her own weakness.

I noticed this in the searching glances which rested

upon me, when she knew that my weary eyes were turned in another direction.

She now sat at the other window in the sitting-room, separated from me by a projection in the wall and a console. She was deep in her book, while I was looking aimlessly and drearily into the street, feeling very wretched.

Noon came. The bright sunshine had enticed many carriages on to the drive before our villa.

I saw several families, with whom we were more or less acquainted, pass by; saw my friends—what else could I call them?—drive along so gaily, saw them nod to us, to show their delight at my recovery.

They were all happy; they took pleasure in the gay sunshine. I should have envied them, had I not in the midst of my pain felt proud and happy in my love for the man who was at once my joy and my despair.

“Hermann!” suddenly cried my mother, half rising from her seat and looking out.

For weeks I had not seen him. He had not troubled himself about my illness, for I never was anything to him. I heard, however, that he had visited my mother once in the meantime.

Her joyous exclamation at the sight of him, did not affect me. Indifferently I turned to the street, but was unpleasantly agitated by that which had so delighted my mother.

Hermann rode by on his favorite horse, a proud, magnificent Andalusian sorrel, a universally admired animal, that shone like gold in the pale light of the sun, that shook its mane coquettishly, and careered smartly over the snow.

It was a small cavalcade. Next him rode Stephanie von Ebersburg, and next her Langenbach, who bowed to my mother and me, smiling significantly, while Stephanie

greeted us with her usual sweet smile and made her jennet curvet.

Hermann, who wished to mold me to his will, paid his attentions to this person openly, without caring what the general opinion was. He, who treated every other woman contemptuously, seemed really the slave of this beauty, about whom the ladies were repeating strange stories, which were in no way to her credit.

And Langenbach, his Pylades, to whom he had recently given his finest horse as a present—I shuddered when I saw the intimacy between these two, a friendship which caused me such misery.

The three passed by; they were followed by Hermann's shaggy Siberian grayhound and two grooms; for when Hermann appeared in public it was always as *grand seigneur*, and his retinue had to be faultless.

I envied my brother, who did as he liked, without paying any heed to the world's opinion, while I, his sister, was obliged to regulate my miserable life according to the laws laid down by those belonging to me.

The friendship of those three made me uncomfortable. I had concluded never to mention my brother to my mother, so as not to collide with her. When the cavalcade had passed, I therefore remained silent.

"The Ebersburg seems to be a born horsewoman," I heard my mother say in a few minutes. "I have seldom seen an Amazon who sat so perfectly in the saddle. I can comprehend why she is so dangerous to young men, she is wonderfully beautiful."

"Yes, she is!" I assented, almost inaudibly.

"Still I do not like it that Hermann is so fascinated."

So my mother was not altogether easy about this relation which was so universally talked of in the Residence.

"Hermann is surely capable of taking care of himself. And yet, perhaps, he is too young to guard himself against such dangerous beauty. Probably she is judged unjustly; it may be envy that causes people to talk so against her. As far as I can tell, her mother is a very nice lady, even if Baroness Pulbach has heard of certain things in the Ebersburg family, which she only tries to use in the interests of her own daughter, who, like all young ladies, has a great liking for Hermann."

My mother was happy when she could speak of the admiration which the ladies entertained for Hermann.

"So much the less should it be taken amiss if the Baroness shares this admiration."

"Hm, yes! But at times I fear she is more dangerous than the others. I wanted to warn Hermann yesterday, but he cut me short."

Had I then spoken a word against Baroness Ebersburg, my mother would have immediately taken her part.

I did not care to continue the conversation, and had just risen to get a book, when another noise in the street attracted my attention.

"Great God, mother! Look——Baroness Ebersburg! Hermann!"——I cried out.

I saw the baroness, encircled by Hermann's arm, being borne toward our house, followed by Langenbach and a servant.

My mother, too, sprang up.

"An accident!" cried she, hurrying to the door, and on the way ringing the bell violently, in order to call the servants.

At first I did not know whether to follow or not. Langenbach's proximity frightened me and rooted me to the spot. However, I collected myself and stepped to the door of the next room. As I reached the threshold, I saw Her-

mann's tall, herculean form, bearing the Countess Ebersburg in his arms, enter the other door.

"It was a fall from her horse, mother!" cried he; "the doctor must be summoned quickly."

With which he placed his lovely burden tenderly upon a divan.

"Langenbach," he called out, "tell George to mount his horse and go for the doctor at once!"

Hermann then locked the door so that Langenbach would not be tempted to enter, at the same time turning to his mother for assistance. The chambermaid and another maid hurried to her side. They both understood at a glance from my mother what had taken place and what was required of them; they approached the divan to assist the injured girl, who just then uttered a cry of pain, while Hermann politely, but very much agitated, walked to the window and looked out, in order not to see what the women were doing.

The tramping of horses attracted my attention. I saw Langenbach with the servant, George, spring into their saddles. Langenbach was probably going to town to call the doctor himself.

In the meantime Stephanie von Ebersburg had regained consciousness, and before she knew where she was, she called out "Hermann!"

Had I had any doubts as to the intimate relations between the two, this cry would have been sufficient to prove it to me.

I saw a cloud upon my mother's brow. The women were so busy, however, attending to the girl, that Hermann, perceiving his presence to be indelicate, had withdrawn to the next room.

Stephanie's accident had completely unnerved me. Our doctor happened to come in to see me on his way by.

He said there was only a sprained ankle, which he set, in spite of Stephanie's cries.

Hermann then left and returned in his carriage, to take Stephanie to her home.

He remained half an hour with my mother, while I sought my room. Very likely I was the subject of their conversation. I had no doubt offended my lord brother by my want of sympathy for Stephanie, and his displeasure at this would, I expected, be shown by his redoubled efforts in his friend Langenbach's cause.

It was utterly impossible for me to take anything but a lukewarm interest in Stephanie. As I saw her lying upon the divan, I was involuntarily seized with a thought which startled me.

Who could it have been but her, who had delivered Eugenie over to justice!

It was strange that I had not thought of that at once. Stephanie and Hermann were old acquaintances, I had heard. They had certainly met at one of the bathing resorts; that I had known, without attaching any importance to it.

I was seized with a contempt for her at this thought. The rumors concerning her now seemed to be warrantable. What a nature it would take to betray so unmercifully such a wretched creature as Eugenie!

Were there not other means by which she might have been silenced?

Again my brother stood before me in all his hardness. Eugenie had ventured to reappear upon the scene. She, now his subject, his slave, must be gotten rid of without delay; so he hatched up this story about her to satisfy the demands of the court and the wishes of Stephanie, who might have been compromised by her presence!

There was a certain fatality which threw this much-to-

be-pitied girl into the hands of him who had been her persecutor from a boy. He who had already destroyed her happiness, was also to banish her from decent society, and to make of her a criminal, by means of this false accusation.

CHAPTER XXII.

Evening arrived. My mother went to the theatre. I felt as if I were committing a wrong, but did not everything combine to cause me to do so?

My maid had been instructed to receive Radom and conduct him to me. In a simple house-dress I awaited him in my sitting-room.

My heart beat anxiously; the least sound in the quiet house made me tremble.

At last I heard the house door open. I heard a creaking upon the stairs and the sound of footsteps upon the floor, then I was in Radom's arms.

A blissful hour flew by.

Radom was pale and nervous, owing to the excitement under which he had been laboring. He shook his head sadly upon seeing me so grieved. We tried to delude ourselves with false hopes; we tried to encourage one another, still we knew how little encouragement had been given us.

I could not resist reproaching him for having treated my brother so coldly from the beginning, for not having tried to be civil to him for my sake.

I attributed our entire misfortune to the fact that he had helped Captain von Langenbach to obtain an influence over my brother, which was so fatal to our hopes.

Radom looked darkly before him.

I thought I should now be able to learn the secret of the antipathy which existed between him and my brother. I pressed his hand.

"Otto," cried I, beseechingly, "be frank with me! I feel, I know, that something must have taken place between you to make you such enemies! Tell the truth! You owe it to me!"

A striking change passed over his face. He forced a smile.

"Nothing happened between him and me," he answered, looking me full in the face.

"Can I take your word for it; will you swear it to me?"

"Yes."

Then their mutual dislike was merely instinctive. I again reproached him for not using more policy.

Otto was silent for a time.

"Undoubtedly you are right," he answered, pushing back his hair with a sigh. "But there is an invisible force in us mortals which will not be biased. I swear to you that I have tried to fight against it with all my might, and should have succeeded, had he not treated me in such a way, on your account, as to raise the demon in me again. In spite of that I have not been anything but civil to him, as far as lay in my power; but since Captain von Langenbach exercises such influence over him, since he has been setting him against me, I have been obliged to avoid him at the club, to keep my distance as politely as possible, for I have seen him several times, egged on by Langenbach, on the point of insulting me in public. For some time I avoided the club; but now the presence of one of my old associates, Sir Arthur Wardley, compels me to go there again. I know that he has dared to make remarks about me at court, which were intended to bring about my removal. I can see that upon the slight-

est provocation he would not hesitate to insult me, and the thought of it makes me tremble for my sake and yours!"

Radom's face again grew dark. I knew only too well that he judged my brother correctly; that Hermann, aggravated by Langenbach, could easily forget himself, and should he do so, it would destroy all the hope that we had entertained.

As love is inventive, I suggested that Otto should find an excuse to leave town for a short time, in order to avoid my brother.

He could not at first make up his mind to leave me alone with my mother and brother.

"You then consider me weak!" cried I, with a bitter smile. "Do not fear! I swear to you by all that is holy, by my love for you, that this heart, this hand shall never be given to anyone but you!—are you satisfied now?"

Otto fell at my feet, gratefully covering my hands with kisses. He promised to do as I wished, on the condition that I would send him a few lines daily. In two days, he said, he would leave the Residence with Sir Arthur and remain away two weeks.

We separated after again solemnly plighting our vows. He had scarcely gone, when my mother, who had been taken ill, returned home, sooner than I had expected.

The next morning she asked me a question which I knew had been on her mind for some time.

She desired to know, now that I had fully recovered, when I would receive Langenbach, and upon what day our engagement would take place. Hermann, she added, had the day before, expressed his desire to have the matter settled, and she could no longer delay in carrying out the promise she had given the queen.

With the greatest composure I received this question.

"You know, dear mother," I answered, with the confidence which had inspired me since I had pledged my word to Radom, "you know how difficult it will be for me to disobey your wishes for the first time, but much more difficult, yes, utterly impossible, would it be for me to obey you. Until now I have been an obedient daughter, and am now, although I do not seem to be. It is not your will that demands obedience from me in this affair, which will determine my happiness, but my brother's, and this will I fearlessly disobey. Therefore, I declare to you and my brother, who never has experienced for me a particle of that love which is a sister's due, that I have made my decision—that my heart and hand are given to Baron Otto von Radom, and that I would rather renounce society, even my life, than him!"

After this declaration I arose. I approached my mother and tried to take her hand, which she drew away. I then threw myself at her feet, clung to her imploringly, but when I looked up, it was into a very stern face.

In vain I appealed to her maternal heart. In vain I recalled to her how dear I had been to her before this estrangement, when she submitted to her son's tyranny; her son who had always cared as little for her as he did for me. My tears were useless.

She did not speak, and as often as I looked at her, I met the same stern, repellent gaze.

"Go to your room!"

Those were the only words she had for me.

My injured pride, the consciousness of the rejection of my filial love, made me rebel. I sprang up and left the room.

That day I dined alone, for toward noon my mother

had driven out, and had left word with the servants that she would not return until evening.

Not feeling able to taste a morsel, I sat in my room. My thoughts were with Otto, and now my only care was that something might happen to him.

Not a line did I receive from him that livelong day, and yet I had expected a note, for the next day he was to leave town.

That evening I was very lonesome. I tried to overcome my anxiety by writing to Otto—a long, long letter, with an account of what had taken place that day, and with renewed assurances that my oath was inviolable.

Night came, a long winter's night. I could not sleep. My maid told me that my mother had been ill, and had retired early.

The next morning passed without bringing me any news from Otto. I sent my letter to him.

Even at noon I had not heard from him.

My mother was invisible. I was a prisoner in my room. What had taken her to town the day before?

Through the butler my maid had learned that before going out, in fact, immediately after I left her, she had written a letter, which a servant had taken to my brother. Without doubt she had informed him of what had passed between us.

I could picture to myself my brother's rage. He, who had given his word of honor that I should become Langenbach's wife, now knew that I had secretly pledged myself to Baron von Radom, and all his anger would naturally be turned against him.

Danger threatened Otto.

Hermann and Langenbach would execrate him, would be revenged upon him, for he stood in their way.

My brother saw his authority over me spurned, and

Langenbach was compromised. He had accepted congratulations, and had in his vanity made himself ridiculous.

How pleased I was that I had advised Radom to go away for a time. It would be best so. In the meantime Hermann's anger would cool, and Langenbach would become reconciled to the inevitable.

Still no news from Otto. The afternoon was gone, and it grew dark.

Then suddenly I received a shock.

The butler had told my maid, who told me, that the evening before at the club the young Count von M., in the presence of a number of the members, without any provocation, had called Otto a "villain." Baron von Radom, who, with an Englishman, had come to take his supper at the club, had immediately left with his friend, and the count had called after him mockingly.

Entirely crushed by this information, and worried by the thought of what the result might be, I fainted, and upon recovering, buried my face in my hands to shut out the bloody scene which arose before me.

During the evening not a line came for me.

My anxiety increased, and my breath was labored on account of the violent pulsations of my heart.

Suddenly my mother rushed into my room deathly pale.

"My son!—where is my son, my proud, handsome son?" cried she, shrilly, extending her arms toward Heaven. After uttering these words she fell to the floor unconscious, before I, in my terror, could catch her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I passed the night at my mother's bed-side; a long, painful night, during which our servants were kept busy, and which required the attendance for hours of our family physician.

My mother's condition seemed to cause him serious anxiety. Her old trouble had been aggravated by excitement.

She had severe nervous attacks during the night, and when she came to herself, she cried for her son, wished to jump up, and could not be quieted.

I was so wrought up that my strength gave out.

As yet I had no tidings from Radom. I sent to Hermann's lodgings. The servants said that the count had not yet returned; he had gone away the day before with his groom without leaving any orders; they thought that he had gone to his castle.

I sent also to Radom's apartments, and received a much more disquieting report from there.

Baron von Radom, they said, had dismissed his servants, closed his rooms, and driven to the station with his portmanteau.

There was no doubt but that they had both a bloody rencontre in view. The insult, which Radom had received from my brother, must be expiated. Radom would be considered cowardly, did he not demand satisfaction.

It had been some time since their departure, the most dreadful things might have happened. Surely the news

of the result must have arrived, but—from whom could I find it out.

In town the story passed from mouth to mouth that Count von M. and the counselor of the embassy, Baron von Radom, had left home, to meet one another in a certain place. They told of my brother's insult to Radom at the club; they undoubtedly censured the former, for Radom had many friends; they ornamented the incident with the most wonderful details; as I heard later, they even reported that same evening that Radom had shot Count von M., while others maintained to the contrary.

My mother first learned of the whole terrible affair when a person arrived from court to find out the particulars from her.

She had not the slightest suspicion of what had taken place, and fainted in the presence of the chamberlain who had come to her for information. When she regained consciousness, she asked him to tell her what had happened, and he, embarrassed at being the first to bring her the news, told her with all the care that he could, that the entire court was much excited, that the king himself had given orders to find out what route they had taken, to follow and arrest them in his name, in order to prevent any rash act.

In her fear for the safety of her son, she had rushed into my room and fallen into a condition in which she was wildly delirious all night.

For my mother's sake I made an effort. I overcame my own suspense about my loved one, I tried to be brave, and told myself that many duels had taken place without serious results. But when I had consoled myself on that point, the misery of the future obtruded itself upon me.

Radom and my brother were sworn enemies—was it

likely that a reconciliation would take place, even if the affair were settled, and what would then become of me?

O! that night! that terrible night!

Had it been day I might perhaps have diverted my thoughts by some work. As it was, there was nothing to do but to wring my hands, and to send out messengers every half-hour to ask at the lodgings of both, and at the club as well, if any news had arrived.

Some consolation was given me, when, late in the evening, the same chamberlain drove up to our door, to announce to us from the king that the telegraph was being operated in every direction, in order to hunt up the rivals, the police had sent their cleverest officials after them, and everything was arranged to avoid any misfortune.

I hastened to the chamberlain myself with trembling limbs and tear-stained face, for my mother was in no condition to receive him.

I asked for Langenbach, for the young English diplomatist, with whom for the past few days Radom had been continually, and with whom he was said to be very intimate.

The chamberlain shrugged his shoulders.

Captain von Langenbach had asked the prince for leave of absence for twenty-four hours; the prince had granted it to him without any misgiving; now Langenbach was nowhere to be found, although they had heard at the station, that Count von M. had departed accompanied only by his groom.

The Englishman, Sir Arthur Wardley, had also been sought in vain. He had settled his bill and set off, no one knew where to.

Langenbach's leave, the chamberlain added, had

expired that evening; he would without doubt return in the night or early the next morning. The prince had placed some one in Langenbach's rooms, who was to announce his arrival at once. In the morning we should have positive news, if the telegraph did not inform us in the night of their having found and arrested both men, according to the king's strict order.

So the night passed slowly, second after second. All was quiet; no message came, and my fear almost drove me mad.

My mother's piercing cries rent the air when she awoke from the stupefaction occasioned by the strain upon her nerves.

She called for Hermann. She wanted to jump out of my bed, in which she had been placed. She tore her hair, and tortured my weary heart anew when, in her despair, she cursed the innocent Radom, called him her son's murderer, and called down God's vengeance upon him. My only resource was to take refuge in a lie to prevent my mother from losing her mind.

My maid was to bring the news that Radom and Hermann had been arrested before the duel was fought.

Then my mother sank back upon her pillows with a sigh which came from the depths of her agonized heart, and fell into a sleep almost like death.

I had succeeded in quieting her, but I dreaded her awakening; I dreaded the morning, which would bring matters to a head.

Again second after second, minute after minute passed by. One hour followed another slowly. Sleep would not come to my eyes, and when, exhausted, I leaned back in my chair, my chin upon my breast, the slightest sound startled me.

During this terribly long and miserable night, a per-

plexity was raging within me, which rendered my mind a chaos, and would not allow me to form any clear ideas.

I did not expect that the king's measures and the exertions of the police would be able to prevent the catastrophe. I could easily calculate what a start the two must have had. Vain seemed to me, therefore, all attempts to prevent the duel.

Both were dear to me, very dear. A sister's duty and a natural feeling of affection, which only possessed me now that I knew my brother to be in the greatest danger, forced me to whisper soft, timid prayers for his deliverance, for my mother's life depended upon his.

At the same time love was praying for the life of another—for a life upon which mine depended.

Which of the two would return?

My thoughts carried me to the bloody scene. I saw Hermann lying upon the ground shot through the breast. I shuddered. I covered my face with both hands. Then again I heard Hermann's familiar, mocking laugh. I started. I thought I heard his footsteps, saw him enter, and in his heartlessness relate to my mother what had taken place between him and Radom.

A memory from my early youth occurred to me which greatly increased my anguish and bathed my brow in a cold perspiration.

Just as my brother now, so had my father once sacrificed for a trifle, with a gallant's cold composure, the life of a friend. But Hermann and Radom had not been friendly from the first; between them there had always existed an irreconcilable aversion, and if now one of them had been killed, would not another victim fall at the same time; either my mother or I?

What a strange repetition of events, that the son, like his father, should use a weapon to destroy so dear a life!

And was not this fatal similarity a guarantee that this duel would terminate in a like manner?

This certainty augmented my despair. I sobbed aloud. Even the fear of awakening my mother did not suffice to soften the outburst of my grief. I must weep and cry aloud; my strength was exhausted.

* * * * *

When I awoke, I heard my mother call my name. I sat up in my chair. I shivered. I tried to collect my thoughts, looked about me as if awakening from a confused dream, and saw a maid sitting by my mother's bed-side.

It was so dreary, so miserable in the room!

The lamp diffused a faint, melancholy light, which threw pale, gray streaks upon the tapestry curtains at the window. Only the clock upon the mantel-piece ticked busily. It struck seven. It was morning!

Morning! A shudder ran through me as I thought of the terrible significance of this morning. The whole horror of our situation appeared to me. Several minutes I stood there, my face buried in my hands, without the courage to look upon the already fast dawning day.

A noise in the room attracted my attention.

It was the maid, who arose from my mother's bed-side and approached me.

I grasped her arm and drew her into a corner.

"I have been asleep," whispered I to her. "I could sleep; I can not understand how it was possible——Tell me, has any news been received?"

The woman shook her head sadly, put her finger to her lips, and pointed to my mother, who seemed to be dozing.

Then I remembered the falsehood, by means of which I had quieted her.

Anxiously I drew the maid through the door into the next room.

"Still no news?" I asked again.

I tried to read her face, but it was as troubled and weary as mine, for she had been up all night, awaiting my maid, who was to relieve her.

"The count's valet was here again an hour ago to tell us that he did not go to bed at all last night, so that he would be able to bring us any news that might come. But up to now no message has arrived, neither has Captain von Langenbach returned."

So day had dawned, and still no decisive news; perhaps this day, too, would leave us in the same uncertainty.

What should we say to my mother when she awoke? What should I do to carry on this untruth, which might so easily be found out! Doubly hard did I consider my position, for I looked upon myself as the only person aware of this bloody secret.

As I entered my room disconsolately, I again heard my mother's faint voice.

"Has Hermann returned?"

"No, mamma!"

"Send to his apartments and inquire."

"His valet was just here to tell us that he awaited his master's arrival all night, but he had not come!"

"The good man! Hermann must reward him."

My mother again fell into a doze.

What happened from early morning until noon, I scarcely knew. I was in a state of confusion, which I might almost call a trance.

I saw, it is true, that it was day, that the sun at times cast its rays upon the terrace. I saw my mother raise herself. I heard that she spoke to me, and understood that Hermann was the subject of her talk.

I saw, as I lay in my chair, our physician step up to

me, take my hand in his, and heard his voice; but what he said, I did not understand.

Then I knew nothing more, and toward noon I sank into a deep sleep, succumbing to my weariness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The darkest and strangest rumors were afloat in the town, without penetrating our abode.

Captain von Langenbach was said to have returned home at noon, but—alone.

They reported that he had immediately repaired to the prince, who had driven with him to the king to beg for an audience, which was granted them.

Sir Arthur Wardley was said to have arrived an hour later—alone.

He got out at his hotel, and went to Baron von Radom's rooms, to which he had the key.

We heard of the arrival of both, but nothing further. My mother was easy about Hermann, but I, alas, had no means of consolation.

Before the winter evening closed in, I heard a carriage drive up.

I rushed to the window.

Herr von Langenbach got out of the carriage and hurried into the house.

How I descended the stairs, I do not know. I met him in the ante-room. He was pale—very pale. His features betrayed a strong tension, and his whole manner a certain solemnity.

Before I could address him, my mother opened the door of the small drawing-room.

"Captain von Langenbach!" cried she, with delight. "You at last bring me news of my son!"

Langenbach started at my mother's smiling countenance. I felt as if I should fall to the ground, for I knew what his strange behavior meant.

I wished to motion to him, to whisper to him, but he was too much agitated to notice me.

"Where is Hermann? Have you brought him with you?" asked my mother.

Langenbach was speechless.

"No—o! gracious countess!" was finally his hesitating answer.

"Where is he?" cried my mother, surprised. "They told me they had succeeded in preventing that terrible duel!"

Langenbach was embarrassed. He had probably decided upon what he would say beforehand, but my mother's questions upset him.

"Speak, Herr von Langenbach, I pray you! They have deceived me; I can tell by your face! Tell me the truth! You see, I am strong enough to hear you! For God's sake! are there no true friends in this world?"

With that my mother laid her hand on his arm and looked sharply and searchingly into his face.

"Something has happened to Hermann. I can read it in your eyes! The truth! the truth!" cried my mother.

"Dear countess," stammered Langenbach, "I assure you I was not present; but it is not improbable that the result of the duel was not entirely satisfactory——"

"Hermann is dead!" screamed my mother, and sank upon the floor with a piercing cry of anguish.

The servants hurried in. They carried her to the divan. I had been standing there, supporting myself against a chair, with a deathly countenance and trembling limbs.

I do not know how I retained my presence of mind. Perhaps the thought that Radom was alive had some effect upon me.

Whilst my mother was being carried out I seized Langenbach's arm.

"Herr von Langenbach!" cried I, in a scarcely audible voice, "Tell me! is my brother dead? Tell me, so that I may know how to comfort my mother, or for what I have to prepare her!"

Langenbach could not evade me.

I can remember yet that he looked at me with a kind of triumph.

He bent down to my ear.

"There is no doubt but that at this moment he is already——" Langenbach hesitated here, but I heard no more.

I fell back upon the chair.

Yet once again I had the strength to rise. In spite of the mist which gathered before my eyes, I saw Langenbach still standing there.

I staggered up. I grasped his arm.

"More!—tell me more!" cried I, as another agonized cry reached us from the next room.

"For your comfort, dearest countess, I may add that Baron von Radom is alive!"

Langenbach said this in a sarcastic, malicious tone. Even my mother's condition did not prompt him to spare me. I could not see him, for my eyes filled with tears. I heard his footsteps. I groped about with my hand to find him—he was gone.

Radom my brother's murderer! That was the dagger which Langenbach had planted in my heart; that was the only idea of which I was capable, and that was so terrible that I again lost my consciousness.

CHAPTER XXV.

Eight days had flown, eight days full of terror and sadness, days which supplied the immediate means of a horrible drama.

Exhausted and tired of life, I sat by my mother's bed-side. Our house was deserted. No one passed by without casting an awe-struck glance at it. Society pitied us, but its sympathy was mixed with a horror like that which possesses one on a place of execution.

Society knows no true, pure compassion. On a joyful occasion, it is not free from envy and malice. On a sorrowful occasion, it must consider its own nerves.

It came on foot and in carriages to inquire for us, to express its sympathy in due, conventional form; but this form was a nuisance to me, for it kept the servants busy continually. Our door-bell announced its calls, and when that was silent, we knew that society had fulfilled its duty toward us.

The court and the prince's household had shown us the required respect; and now that it had grown ominously quiet I sat, like an animated corpse, by my mother's bed-side.

My blood congeals as I write down the events of that day.

There lay my mother, reduced almost to a skeleton, and up to this time she had not heard all.

When she had become conscious, they told her that her son was seriously wounded, but they hoped to save him, they even thought they would be pretty certain of it.

The doctor considered her in a very grave condition, for her old trouble had been dangerously aggravated. As I urgently begged to be told whether to hope or fear, the doctor assured me that I might hope.

I know what he wished to say.

I was not sufficiently recovered to be able to nurse my mother. Sleepless nights and the excitement of days had almost made me ill again; still that night I had to watch by her side.

The doctor had used every means in his power to keep further intelligence from us.

All that I knew was, that probably Hermann had fallen, that Radom was living, and my brother's murderer.

As such, was he not dead to me? Though he had been forced to direct his weapon against Hermann, he was still his murderer; he had broken the bonds which had until now indissolubly united us.

I entreated the doctor, who was the only person that entered the sick-room, to tell me more of what had happened.

He shook his head; he maintained that he knew nothing except that my brother had been seriously wounded.

I thought that Hermann was dead!

I begged him to tell me if they had brought his corpse. He shrugged his shoulders; he gave me his word that the corpse had not arrived, and told me that I might believe the truth of his statement that Hermann had only been wounded and could not be moved.

My mind was in such an agonized state, that I felt as if I must rush into the street and ask the first passer-by if he knew anything about my brother's fate.

I longed for certainty, but owing to the strict seclusion in which the doctor held us, no one dared satisfy me.

"Truth! truth!" was echoing within me. Even the servants had been instructed by the doctor, and spoke just as he did.

One thought followed me like a black demon; the conviction that Langenbach had played a disgraceful part in this drama.

I had discovered that by the way in which he told me that Radom was alive, and which I could not forget.

"Langenbach is my brother's murderer, not Radom!" I repeated. That secret "something" which had set them against one another, that had made them enemies, was Langenbach!

My mother's condition on the fourth day seemed less alarming. She had called continually for her son, and that morning she seemed able to understand more clearly what the doctor had repeated to her daily, namely, that her son, wounded as he had been, was not so far recovered as to be brought home.

The hope of my mother's life being spared to me comforted me that day. Although I was weary, and it scared me upon looking in the mirror to see a pale, sorrowful face, I felt more composed.

"Dear doctor," said I, accompanying him purposely into the ante-room, "I feel strong enough to-day to hear everything. Be frank with me; at least release me from the prison in which you have fastened me, so that I should hear nothing from the outer world. I warn you that the first time I am able to leave my mother's side I shall run into town to obtain the news which you keep from me. This secret will kill me! I can bear it no longer! I shall lose my mind!"

The doctor took my hand and drew me toward a seat. "Countess," he whispered, feeling my pulse, "what I did, what I ordered to be done, my duty as a physician

demanded. I see that you are calm; I see that the knowledge of what has happened will add more to your composure than a continuation of this uncertainty. Of what has happened you know the sad outline, the rest this letter, which I have carried about with me five days, will tell you."

The doctor drew out a letter and handed it to me, hesitatingly and with a searching glance.

My hand shook; my heart beat violently. But scarcely had I read the address, when the letter fell from my hand. I hid my face.

"From —— the —— murderer of my brother! I dare not touch it!"

The doctor stooped and picked up the letter.

"Sir Arthur Wardley applied to me, countess, to deliver this letter to you. On account of the great delicacy which this man showed, on account of the tender and respectful manner of this friend, it was impossible for me to refuse this favor to him, or, rather, to the writer of this letter, a man whom I have always highly esteemed. Sir Arthur told me that he was commissioned to seek you out personally; he asked me, countess, to acquaint you with this as soon as I considered it proper, and added that he would not leave town until he had fulfilled his mission."

Gazing sadly before me, struggling with myself, I was silent a long time.

"From my brother's murderer. I can neither read this letter nor see Sir Wardley."

"You are mistaken, dearest countess," the doctor interrupted, "Baron von Radom is not your brother's murderer!"

I stared at the doctor. I thought there was hope in these words,

"My brother is dead!" cried I. "Do not try to deceive me as you do my mother!"

"No one can say whether or not your brother is dead at this moment."

"Then he lives! Did you tell my mother the truth?" cried I, hastily.

"If you, countess, desire to know the truth—no!"

"Herr von Radom wounded him—killed him!"

The doctor laid his finger upon his lips to silence me, for my mother might hear my words.

"Herr von Radom did neither the one nor the other; you may take my word for it!" cried he, emphatically.

"It is your duty, countess, to read this letter, and after that you will tell me if, and when, you wish to receive Sir Wardley. You asked me to tell you all. I have done, and do what you desire."

The doctor's words sounded so determined, as he again put the letter in my hand, that I sat there motionless.

"Your mother has just fallen into a doze. Seize the opportunity, countess. This afternoon I shall return." With which, he left.

The paper burned my hand. All was quiet about me. My heart beat loudly as finally my eyes rested upon the characters, which formerly had always filled me with delight, and the longer I looked at them, the more did they impress me with that same feeling.

"Not his murderer!" I said to myself, "Take my word for it!" so said the doctor.

What torment had the thought occasioned me that this man, upon whom I had set my affections, even though against his will, had upon his conscience my brother's death, that this man who had sworn that he loved me, could have——

How perplexing it all was. I must have certainty. I dried my tears, I tore open the envelope and——

There were those characters so dear to me, as harmonious as Otto's speech, those characters, each of which had always been an avowal of love!

Some minutes passed before I could gather strength enough to read.

Only the first line, "Dear, adored Paula!" could I at first decipher, and it awoke in me again all the boundless love which had cost me so much to stifle.

"Courage?" said I to myself. "He is innocent! He must be!"

And with the paper dancing before my eyes, and my heart throbbing wildly, I read the letter, which seemed to me like a last will and testament.

"That blissful hour, which I spent with you for the first time undisturbed, I shall probably pay for with my life, but I shall give it cheerfully, if it be so decreed.

"I write to you to-day on the border between life and death.

"Receive this as a farewell, so painful to me that my heart would break, did I not need it a few more hours for my honor's sake.

"All that feeling of violence and anger which possessed me, has been overcome since my return this evening to my apartments.

"Your brother succeeded the night before my departure in giving vent to the grudge he bore me. I have my choice of either being dishonored in the opinion of the world, or of demanding satisfaction from him, and either will be followed by the loss of my life's happiness.

"I am lost to you in either case, and choose therefore an expedient, which will at least keep me from charging

myself with the death of a man who is the brother of my beloved Paula.

“But I shall certainly not give you up, Paula, without giving you the key to a secret which has so often troubled you, and which should never have been divulged.

“For a long time—ah! too short a time—I vainly hoped that fate would be propitiated. I thought I could shirk a mission which inspired me with horror. Now fate herself forces me to fulfill it.

“When I first saw you, dearly beloved Paula, I turned from you tremblingly; I tried to escape from you; my brain whirled; I felt that I must love you.

“It cut me to the heart when I heard your beauty, your accomplishments, your amiability extolled in society; for I had to avoid you, and I loved you.

“Once before, I had met you in the street in my native place, to which I had returned for several days. Amazed, lost in admiration, I stood there and looked after you.

“I heard that you were the Count von M.’s daughter, and tried to hate you.

“You ask: “Why, what had I done?”

“Nothing; not you; you angel in mind and form! Nothing! But I am the son of that unhappy Baron von Reuth, of that friend of your father, of that unfortunate man whom your father shot, because my father’s brother had made an innocent, but thoughtless remark about him! I am that man’s son, who, after my mother’s death, was adopted by my uncle, Baron von Radom, whose name I assumed.”

With a cry of surprise, the letter fell in my lap.

That was the fatal secret which he had kept from me.

And now his often strange behavior was clear to me; his anxiety, his perplexity, when I requested him to be frank with me; and which perhaps he would not have refused me later, when fate had joined us. I read further:

“This uncle taught me to hate Count von M. with all my might. Very early he impressed upon me that I must avenge my innocent father’s murder, as he called it.

“Count von M. died. My business took me abroad; I thought no more of retribution, for my father’s murderer would now have to answer for his sins before a higher tribunal.

“Then I saw you the second time. What I felt at the sight of you, I have just confessed.

“I saw you again and again. I must go away; I left no stone unturned to obtain my removal, but I was always sent back here.

“Finding that I was struggling in vain, I remained, and my heart gained the victory over my will, when I had a chance to admire your voice, your beauty, and your gentleness.

“Then your brother came. I loved you and was most happy in possessing your love. A feeling got the better of me which began to wrestle powerfully with my love—an aversion to your brother, who was pictured to me on all sides as the image of his father in person and character.

“You know that for your sake I conquered that aversion, that, finally, I could even make up my mind to treat him civilly. To feign a truly friendly feeling for him, my honor forbade.

“You often begged me to approach him. I tried to, but it was as if my father’s spirit stepped between him and me.

“Chance may have betrayed to your brother my family

name—I only suppose this. But I hoped some day to introduce myself to him under that name; for your sake to offer him the hand of the son of his father's innocent victim, and, by a formal reconciliation, lay my father's ghost.

“Other influences prevented me.

“By an intimate friend, whose name is only too familiar to you, whose personal interests clashed with mine, he was set against me, and what he could not accomplish, was completed by a woman of the commonest order, who had inveigled him into her net, Baroness von Ebersburg, whom poverty or misfortune had brought so low, that I saw her once in Paris in the very depths of degradation. She did not know that I had seen her. But papers passed through my hands officially which disclosed to me her Parisian connections. Since then she has treated me with the greatest kindness; but a silly fear of some indiscretion on my part, must have induced her to secretly prejudice your brother against me, and the ill-will he has borne me since he discovered our love, exploded this evening in a manner which no atonement could make good.

“I see in that, which is unavoidable and which lies before your brother and me, a repetition of what took place between his father and mine.

God is my witness that I did everything in my power to avoid an *éclat*!

“But how inexorable is fate! Still it drew our hearts together. It broke the bonds to plunge you and me into despair.

“Do not fear for him, Paula, who must be dear to you. Fear nothing from my hand. I decided long ago to forget that blood-guiltiness, and even fate shall not force me to carry out what it is hatching.

"My hand shall not serve as the instrument, it may accomplish what it wishes.

"You, my life, for whom I am about to part; you, my soul, must not be angry with me. I wish to be guiltless if I live, and guiltless if I die.

"Think of me affectionately, and remember that whatever happens, is what I could not prevent and what is against my will.

"I am lost to you if I live or die; may he be so too who caused my death.

"May God judge us both, and bless you a thousand times for your love.

"And now accept a last, affectionate kiss from

"Your departing

"OTTO."

With a great effort, interrupted several times by tears, I succeeded in reading to the close. I felt as if my heart had ceased to beat.

The world was to me as a grave; this semi-conscious, dark, dreary condition was a benefit to me. I would have liked to die like him——

But no; he still lived! Langenbach himself had told me; it must be true. My brother was the victim, and he the guilty one! Had he not written: "Fear no harm to him from me."

But what had happened? Otto's words were mysterious and incomprehensible.

I shivered.

The explanation of that secret, that enigmatical "something," occurred to me. My thoughts flew back to the time when we first met; he had it been who had formed my ideal, and now that lovely dream was ended, and so miserably!

I sank back. I closed my eyes and reflected.

I must speak with Sir Arthur Wardley as soon as possible.

He, Radom's confidant, would be able to explain all. He could tell me about my brother's fate, for he must know everything——

A noise at the door interrupted my meditation.

The maid entered to tell me that my mother had awakened.

CHAPTER XXVI.

What the whole town knew, what had interested society and people in general for days, we knew nothing of, we, whom it so nearly concerned.

Our house was like a grave, so silent. I saw the passers-by cast a side-long, shy glance at our house in passing, and saw how strangely the neighbors looked up at our windows, but since their sympathy had been expressed by leaving their cards, no one had entered our house.

However, our name was in everybody's mouth. Everyone spoke of young Count von M.'s fate, and instead of diminishing, the interest in it increased every day, every hour.

Our doctor returned sooner than he had promised.

He found my mother calm, but very weak. To allay my anxiety, he called my attention to the patient's beneficial rest, while I perceived how perceptibly her strength had decreased.

The doctor's first question related to Sir Arthur's visit.

I was obliged to speak with the latter; I had con-

cluded to receive him as soon as my mother's condition permitted.

"I myself will remain with our patient; when do you wish to see him?" asked he, and I noticed that he was anxious to have me hear the truth from a reliable source.

"If it is convenient for Sir Arthur, after dark."

The doctor was much pleased with this answer. He seemed to comprehend why I had chosen the evening.

"I shall go to him immediately," said he, quickly. "Will you permit me to bring him at once? I have promised your mother several times to talk with her about her condition as soon as she was well enough; you will, therefore, have time enough to listen to Sir Arthur."

Laboring under a terrible excitement, breathing with difficulty, an hour later I entered the drawing-room in which formerly my mother welcomed her guests.

I was miserable, and that made me feel as if I were going to hear something dreadful. What else could the doctor's mysterious silence forebode? He must know all. Why did he not tell it to me himself? Why should he seek an interpreter in Sir Arthur?

It was easy for him to deceive my mother; it was his duty as a physician. He had left me in the belief that my unhappy brother was badly wounded. That he was still alive, he concluded from the fact that his corpse had not arrived, that not even the tidings of his death had been received.

This last he had assured me upon his word of honor. He had appealed to Otto's letter, but that was more perplexing than anything; beside, it had been written before the catastrophe, in such a strain as to prepare me for the worst, and yet to leave me completely in the dark.

I now wished to learn everything through Sir Arthur, and I would not receive this strange man as the friend and messenger of Radom, as my brother's mortal enemy, but as the supposed witness of that bloody scene, who might also give me news of Hermann.

I cautiously set the evening as the time for his visit. Sir Arthur was probably known as Radom's friend; he might have been seen with the latter; it was most likely known that he had witnessed the duel, and the world might censure me if I allowed this man to cross my threshold.

My anxious agitation was joined with a certain amount of fear, as I stepped into the salon. Every shadow cast by objects in the room startled me. It seemed to me as if a form must step forth. I saw first Hermann, then Otto, who had been so dear to me, and I shuddered as my gaze rested upon the life-sized portrait of my mother, which had delighted me so much as a child.

My mother then and—now! The poor, wasted invalid was the same that beamed from that canvas in the charm of her youthful beauty.

And our relations then and—now!

I passed my hand over my eyes in order to blot out the comparison. I groped for a seat and was about to sink down, when my maid entered.

The noise at the door made me start up. I imagined that it was Sir Arthur, who would find me unprepared for him, although he knew that I had expected him.

"The strange gentleman, who came with the doctor," said my maid's voice.

"He is—welcome!"

I arose and felt how unsteady were my limbs. I supported myself upon the arm of an easy-chair, and saw the tall, slender form of a young man dressed in black,

enter. A hasty glance at him showed me a thoroughly English face, with refined, regular features and a light beard. As he approached me respectfully, I saw in his face a gravity, a determination, which impressed me.

This man was Otto's friend!

"Gracious countess," said a clear voice in purest German, in which a slightly British accent was noticeable, "I feel honored to be able to fulfill a mission, which to me is so sacred, so inviolable, that even at the risk of annoying you, I must discharge it."

Sir Arthur spoke with a solemnity which affected me deeply. While he spoke he looked down, and only raised his eyes when with a movement of my hand I invited him to a seat opposite me.

His voice, his dignified and at the same time modest manner, his elegant and easy carriage, his black clothes, his black gloves, in conjunction with the solemnity of his demeanor, all exercised such an influence over me that I listened to him gladly.

It required an effort for me to utter a few words, and beside, the right was denied me of expressing any pleasure at his visit.

"Doctor Wilder told me I should hear from you," I faltered. Sir Arthur Wardley understood the pain of that moment.

I again invited him silently to be seated and seated myself likewise upon the sofa.

"Has the gracious countess read my dear friend, Otto von Radom's letter?" asked he in his resonant voice, even clearer and firmer than before.

"I read the letter of a man, Sir Arthur, who was as dear to me as to you, and dearer, but of whom——"

"I pray you, do not condemn my unfortunate friend," Sir Arthur interrupted very decidedly.

"Otto von Radom acted like a man, whom honor unrelentingly forced to sin against all that he held dearest and most sacred; what he was obliged to do, however, was done so carefully that he should be held guiltless by you, countess. I was the witness of his actions, the confidant of his motives, the counsellor of his resolutions, and swear to you by heaven that his thoughts and actions in so difficult a situation were governed by the hope of being free from reproach as far as you were concerned. That he succeeded is owing partly to my share in it, though the issue could be nothing but fatal. It required the death of either the one or the other!"

"So my brother Hermann is dead?" cried I.

"I am unable to answer your question!"

"You too?—Great God! I allowed you to come in order to learn the truth, or at least to throw light upon this terrible darkness, and you——"

"I beg your permission to relate to you truly and clearly the whole affair."

"Speak—I beseech you!"

Sir Arthur drew a deep breath.

"Otto von Radom," began he, "with whom for years I have been very intimate, was, in my presence and in the presence of others, offered an insult which could only be atoned for by bloodshed. As together we were leaving the club, Count von M., turning to his companion, called loudly after us:

"To-morrow I shall shoot that intriguing person as if he were a dog!"

"At this insult, deep, condemnatory silence reigned in the club. Several gentlemen hurried after Radom to express to him their indignation.

"We repaired to Radom's lodgings. Here my friend clenched his fists, here he acted like a madman, and only

then did I learn, when he grew more composed, the cause of the to me so incomprehensible insult and also of his despair.

“Otto von Radom and I, gracious countess,” interpolated Sir Arthur, very delicately, “had never secrets from one another. He owed me this confession in the face of the situation, but nothing else in the world would have driven him to it. He looked death in the face and thought it necessary to make me the private attorney of his thoughts and actions.

“I spent the remainder of the evening with him. I promised not only to prepare the way of his last, difficult course, but to stand by his side in it.

“Permit me, gracious countess, to mention the ceremonies which necessarily accompany an affair of honor between two men, and which are unfamiliar to ladies.

“My unhappy friend would hear of none of the weapons that I proposed. He explained that he could not direct them against the brother of the lady to whom he belonged with his whole heart and soul. It was my sorrowful duty, as I saw him weaken, to impress him with the necessity of making a choice.

“Then Radom seized my hand and pressed it in his. I saw that something was on his mind.

“‘Arthur,’ began he, ‘have you ever believed in fate?’

“I looked at him in dumb astonishment. His face was almost demoniacal, an expression which I had thought that fine, open countenance incapable of.

“‘In my life a drama is being spun out. Unconsciously I have become the hero! You know I am not the son of Baron von Radom, but rather his adopted child, whom he took when my unhappy father fell in a duel, and my mother, overcome by grief and despair, soon

followed him. I was obliged to assume his name and lay aside that of my father, Baron von Reuth, in order that I might inherit the large fortune which was taken from me all but a small portion. My father was the victim of a proud, overbearing man, who fell upon him from behind the whist table, and the next morning shot him down. This murderer of my father was Count von M., the father of that same Count von M., who overwhelmed me, his son, to-night with the most barefaced insults in a strikingly similar manner.

“ ‘ I am certain that he found out that I am the son of the man whom his father killed, for a short while ago he told his friends at the club over their champagne, about this murder, though he knew me to be sitting quite near him. He who, as I have heard, tries to follow in his father’s footsteps in all things, was longing for an opportunity to exercise his bravado upon me, and that opportunity unfortunately was not lacking.

“ I almost believe that there is some foundation for the fairy tales of our youth, in which a good and evil fairy, a good and evil demon, work their spells. This good fairy taught, yea, forced me to love the sister of my mortal enemy, an angel of beauty and goodness; to her is it owing that all thoughts of revenging my father’s death entirely left me. But the evil fairy was victorious and to-morrow she will place the weapons in our hands.

“ One of us must fall!

“ Paula’s husband I can never be, even if no one can accuse me of having killed her brother. If I live, I shall be dead to her! If he lives, Paula will be the object of his harsh will under which he will try to bend her, through which he wishes to deliver her over to one of his parasitic friends.

"If I understand the plan of fate aright, it wishes to prepare mine under similar circumstances. So I will set my plans against these of fate, and it shall say over my grave that I was a good diplomatist.

"I repeat, Arthur, that two motives have fixed my determination and you need not keep them secret in case I die; Count von M. shall not have the satisfaction of killing the son of the man whom his father murdered; he shall die without his sister, so dear to me, considering me his murderer! That is one. The other is that after my possible death, his sister shall be protected from his tyranny; his sister whom they would sacrifice to a man whom I have learned to despise, and in whom I recognize the author of my misfortune.

"Now listen to me! When I could not decide upon the weapons, my mind was already made up, and you, Arthur, must act for me. What I have told you, will have explained to you my motives for acting so; if my opponent's second considers my conditions too hard and horrible an equivalent for the rude insult which was offered to me, you may tell him that the result concerns me as much as him, that between him and me there is an old score to be settled, which shall be settled once and forever between the family of Count von M. and that of Baron Reuth, called Radom.

"You can probably imagine my plan. We shall draw lots to decide which of us shall allow himself to be shot through the heart as my father was. He who draws the unlucky lot, will have twenty-four hours' time in which to arrange his affairs.

"After the four and twenty hours have elapsed. one of us would remain; either he or I, and that may not be. *He* may not live, for reasons which I have already given you; *I* do not wish to live, because I take no

interest in life, and have nothing to live for. But the laws of an affair of honor must be carried out, and Count von M., who had the audacity to insult me in the face of the *élite* of society, must have the courage to answer at the same time for the insult and my father's death; if he is frightened by my demands, I shall denounce him publicly as a dishonorable man, and shoot him wherever I meet him.

"So get two lots ready, dear Arthur, a red and a black one.

"He who draws the red one, within the next twenty-four hours must prepare for death. He who draws the black one, will incur the punishment of a moral death, will renounce his name, his position and fortune, and lead an obscure life at least one hundred miles from here.

"If I draw the black lot, there is nothing for me but to do, what, without that, was appointed for me. If the count draws it, he can carry about with him all his life a disagreeable remembrance of his insolence.

"These, Arthur, are my terms, not one iota of which must you allow to be changed. If he is cowardly enough to refuse them, do what you think necessary, but hasten the matter. Leave me alone to-night so that I can put my affairs in order. By to-morrow noon you will have been able to arrange all.

"So, gracious countess," concluded Sir Arthur with a sigh, "my friend's wishes were carried out. Not without objections on the part of your brother and his second, Captain von Langenbach? I was firm when the latter refused the terms. One of the twelve gentlemen who witnessed the insult at the club was to be chosen umpire. It fell to a friend of Radom's, who, after I had told him the reasons for the terms, entered unconditionally into them.

“Captain von Langenbach drew, in the count’s name, the red lot. Forty-eight hours afterward Herr von Langenbach announced to me that his unhappy friend had taken leave of him at his castle, and accompanied only by his groom who, after his death, would find in his breast pockets his last wishes, had gone to the woods, where he would accomplish that which the lot had determined for him. Herr von Langenbach added that his wishes consisted only in this, namely, that his body should be placed in the vault of his forefathers without any show or any witnesses.”

Sir Arthur stopped. He did not dare to look at me and gazed before him some time. I was not capable of uttering a word. My breath often almost ceased during his story; thoughts of my mother outweighed all other feelings.

Hermann dead! killed by his own hand! Terrible! Terrible!

And while my mother, herself not out of danger, believing him to have recovered from his wounds, asked every hour if he had not returned, her gallant son, on whom her heart was set, already lay in the dark, black vault to which we had escorted our father.

Who should give her this message? I dared not; I could not give her her death-blow!

I for my part had been prepared to hear that Hermann no longer lived; only the strange conditions of his death affected me. I saw my unfortunate brother point the muzzle against his breast, saw him fall, in those woods to me so gloomy, in which that murder had taken place, perhaps upon the same spot!—And Radom—He, the murderer!—

No, he was not! Sir Arthur’s story convinced me that he had acted as his noble heart prompted—What had become of him?

Sir Arthur did not speak of him; his delicacy forbade him, and I, I dared not ask for him. I pictured him forsaken, forgotten, wandering about, a voluntary exile. It took several minutes to muster the effect which Sir Arthur's words had made upon me. He perceived my mood and maintained a respectful silence.

Finally, spurred on by the thought that my mother might need me, I was enabled to say a few words to him:

"I thank you from the depths of my poor, sorely-tried heart, Sir Wardley. The misfortune which has come upon my mother and me is crushing; should you see Baron von Radom, take him my thanks for his consideration towards me. More it is not permitted me to say, for my brother's death, under any circumstances, must have separated us from each other forever."

Sir Arthur looked up a trifle surprised. The coolness with which I spoke of Radom may have surprised him, and yet he might have known that the sad issue of this affair, if not brought about by him, had through him imposed upon me the still sadder duty of giving him up.

Sir Arthur inclined his head.

"I do not see him," said he with a sigh. "In him I shall lose a friend who can never be replaced; this loss will isolate me for the future, for no one can be to me what he was; he, with whom I harmonized in all things, with whose mind, even when we were apart, my mind held intercourse. He has left me forever; even my tears were powerless in persuading him to confess to me whither he was going, or in obtaining his promise to send me a few lines.

"‘I have become a nobody!’ said he to me, with a sorrowful smile, ‘and shall assume that position in the

world after I have announced my destiny to my sovereign, have asked for my dismissal, and have put the management in another's hands. The ready-money which I still have may serve to support me sometime, for now-a-days no one finds neither locusts nor honey; this resource must last until I have found some work in the primeval forest or on the Indian frontier, or perhaps until I become the chief of one of the tribes of redskins.

“‘Allow me, dear Arthur, to confess to you what it costs me to part from you; I, who was permitted to possess the enviable good fortune of finding a true friend. Look upon me as dead! mourn me as a departed friend! for it would be just the same if I were the other side of those clouds which you see passing over us, or if I were the other side of the ocean! I once read that the Orientals had succeeded, by virtue of the force of habit, in not thinking at all. If it be in the power of man, I shall acquire the faculty; I shall think no more and if it should ever occur to me that there had once been an Otto von Radom, I would mourn that unfortunate man as one who was very dear to me. If I were in the neighborhood of a church, I should, as a good Catholic, have masses said for his soul.

“‘We are saying farewell in this world, Arthur; he collected himself quickly, for his voice grew tender; ‘I am leaving you, and another, whom I dare not even bid a last farewell, with the loss of whom, I shall cease to exist. You will perform this last act of friendship for me and take her my last farewell. She will not, she can not, refuse to see you, for she knows that no blame attaches to me; she it was who asked me to avoid her brother, and only for one thing do I reproach myself: it is for having gone to the club that evening. Tell her all that you know; tell her, if she still wishes to hear it, that she

was my all; and if, perhaps, soon and far from here, a homeless man should die, his last breath would be a prayer for her happiness and peace!"

"With that Radom embraced me; he pressed me to his breast, looked once again in my face as if he wished to impress my features upon his memory, turned away, ashamed of his tearful eyes, and vanished."

Sir Arthur Wardley said this very carefully, always ready to break off in case I did not wish to listen to him. But his own eyes were moist.

He spoke with an emotion which betrayed how great was his own sorrow, and rose, somewhat ashamed of having exhibited any feeling, but which I thought was an honor to him.

Considering his mission discharged, Sir Arthur Wardley, falling back into his natural reserve and formality, took leave of me very ceremoniously.

I could ask him no questions, though so many were in my mind; I had not the courage to enter upon a subject, the least mention of which awoke my sorrow anew.

From Sir Arthur I had learnt that I was parted forever from a man without whom, several days before, it would have seemed to me impossible to exist.

As he withdrew, I stammered a few words of thanks. It seemed to me, as if with him, my last hope departed, as if the last bond were broken, which, indeed, had already taken place.

Through him had I at least heard of Radom; what he had told me of him, convinced me of the greatness of soul, of the firmness of character of my lost one, of which, even in this critical situation, he had given proof; it also proved to me the inexorableness, the cruelty, with which he, when he saw himself and his happiness to be lost, had known how to punish his opponent.

He had wished to protect me from my brother's tyranny, for he foresaw that by his death I should be exposed to it, therefore he had demanded the most terrible expiation.

Without doubt there was another object at the bottom of it,—atonement for his father's death, if Hermann drew the lot; Hermann's pride should be broken, while he would not be able to lose anything more after having lost me.

There was a large proportion of a man's selfishness in his mode of acting, combined with the implacable vengeance of a man's wounded pride.

And my mother and I were the victims, for my mother would never survive her son's death.

Stunned, divided between cursing and blessing the man to whom, in spite of his innocence, I owed so much pain and misery, I lay in my chair several minutes unable to rise, looking into a future which could only offer me sorrow and tears—tears, so many of which I had shed that my sight was impaired. Gladly would I have died to be released from my woes.

All who had been about me were unhappy, but was not I more unhappy than my companion, than my friend?

As I awoke from a state of semi-unconsciousness, I looked up affrighted. The doctor stood before me; he had taken my hand.

“Countess, I dare not leave you alone! You deceived me when you assured me that you were strong enough to listen to Sir Arthur. Compose yourself. You are the one who has many duties to perform in this house. Your mother feels better; you must be self-possessed so that she suspects nothing. Nothing can be undone. Trust in the future—you may. Think that it is in the

Almighty's power to comfort, to reward those whom he chastiseth. Leave everything to his supreme power, and be you your mother's comfort, for she, you know, needs it; and remember that before everything this is necessary: 'Caution and self-possession!'

With those words he lifted me up. He took my arm, led me, blinded by tears, through the drawing-room to the door, and into my mother's ante-room.

Here I freed myself from his arm, and by a look besought him to give me a few minutes' grace, so as not to show my mother a tear-stained face.

He understood me. He entertained me with the precautions and new treatment which he considered requisite for my mother, and I, who during the past few days had acquired the art of commanding myself in my mother's presence, was ready in a few minutes to enter the room, which he, counting upon my self-possession, again closed after me.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The entire town for a week was full of true and untrue stories of the peculiar and unusual circumstances of the occurrence.

Count M., one of the most brilliant, most prominent persons, whom all knew though he had not been here long, whom all either envied or admired, Count M., whose almost royal court state had attracted the attention of all, in the pride of his manhood, had come to such a sudden and sad end!

At court his death had affected all deeply. The king himself had repeatedly sent for Langenbach; the princes had demanded of him the minutest details; the whole court crowded about him.

They had tried to obtrude themselves upon Sir Arthur Wardley at his hotel in just the same way, in order to obtain from him news of Radom's whereabouts.

Sir Arthur had refused to receive any callers, and his servant kept everyone away from his door.

He was not to be seen, for he had only left his lodging once, and that was to visit me, even the king's adjutant who came to hear the news from him, was refused admittance, like all the rest, on the plea of illness.

When he returned from our house to the hotel, he demanded his account and an hour afterward left town.

It was our doctor who informed me of all this. He had to tell me the news every day ; at my wish he had to give in and have a newspaper sent to our house, for we had had none since that day of terror. I was insatiable in my desire to hear all that related in any way to this sad affair.

The newspapers had of course taken it up and seemed never to tire, for they daily brought to light new details, for the most part bordering on the ridiculous. When my brother's death furnished no more material they fell back upon his life, even upon my father's, and spoke of events which often wounded me deeply because they were invented to amuse the public.

I read not for diversion, for I did not wish to be diverted, but only for occupation.

I was shut off from everyone, for no one came to our house, and those who sent to inquire for my mother's health were answered by the servants.

For hours would I sit, when my mother lay in a doze resulting from weakness, absorbed in my thoughts, indifferent to all that was taking place around me, only conscious of the slightest movement of the invalid, and yet in a state of anxious excitement, of fear.

In spite of my apparent apathy, I was tortured. I grieved for the loss of one of the best and noblest of men; my love for him grew with every hour, in my eyes he was blameless; the more I considered the circumstances, the more I put myself in his place. I was continually expecting that my mother awaking would call for Hermann!

She could not understand why he, if he had recovered, had not come back.

How many untruths had I been obliged to tell in order to quiet her! How many excuses, how many false reasons had I been compelled to offer to show her that he could not have been there yet—and I, I was the only one who had to answer those questions, for she could not bear me from her side, and her nervous attacks would recur if I left the room.

She called me affectionately her best, her dearest child; but Hermann, she would add with a peculiar brightening of her weary eyes, was her heart's delight—the possession of whom every mother envied her.

Once, as she held my hand in hers, which was cold and clammy, she touched the wound which burned within me.

"You see, Paula," said she, "Hermann and I were right to protect you from that man, from that — other one (she dared not mention Radom's name) who was bold enough to wish to take my son's life! No doubt he is dead, for Hermann is a gallant champion to whom he surely was not equal. He is like his father. I remember well how someone ventured to slander him and he had to pay for it with his life."

My mother then fell to meditating upon that event. Slowly she let my hand slip from hers, evidently busy with thoughts which took her back to the past.

It pained me to hear her speak thus.

In her eyes it was a crime to meet her son hostilely. She surely did not know the true cause of this terrible affair, for she had only heard of a duel and had anxiously hurried to me in my room; since that moment she had not been quite conscious.

Daily she cursed the "other one;" I had to hear it and remain silent. But it was just those curses which again awoke my passion for him, a passion which, for a time, had been suppressed by tragical influences, and kept under by a feeling of duty. Radom loved me, though he had tried to hate me. A hundred times did I recall his behavior to me, his reserve, the sudden change. I saw his face, I now understood the struggle which took place within him, his duty as a son—Was not I now in a similar position? Did I not owe to him my brother's death, although the latter had committed a wrong?

As he had done, so did I now fight daily against duty; but that duty itself warned me that he was innocent, that I must not be angry with him, much less hate him. And yet we were lost to each other eternally!

At my urgent request our doctor had decided to employ a means of quieting my mother, which would, at least, help to make my task lighter.

He told her that her son's convalescence had been set back by some carelessness in his treatment, and that it would be some weeks, perhaps a month, before she could see him.

My mother received this with a sigh, but after the doctor had assured her that there was no danger, she was more patient. The thought that her son was living comforted her; she submitted to the inevitable.

So much the more careful did we have to be that no contradictory news should reach her when she was able to sit up, which the doctor promised her in the near future.

Indeed, after some days, she felt strong enough, probably buoyed up more by her peace of mind than her strength; for illness had made a skeleton of her, and I was shocked when she, leaning upon me, tottered to a chair for the first time.

During her illness a number of letters had accumulated which she desired to read. I carefully picked out those which she might not read, amongst them two short letters, which had arrived almost at the same time, one from the castle intendant and one from the chief of the police.

My hand trembled as I laid these letters aside. They were fastened with black seals and undoubtedly contained the news of my brother's interment.

I shuddered at the very thought of the contents of these letters; I therefore did not dare to open them. If they related to business matters they could surely be settled through Hermann's attorney, of whom I had often heard him speak.

A new vexation was occasioned me, when upon the doctor saying that my mother had left her bed, several ladies visited her; Princess Hermine came personally, and the queen sent one of her lady's in waiting.

I had to warn each of them in the ante-room that my mother was as yet ignorant of her son's fate; but how easily might one of them have let slip a word!

To my annoyance the princess used this opportunity to entertain them with "poor Langenbach's" misery, because his engagement had been postponed by this misfortune.

I felt as if I should faint. Fortunately her eyes met mine; I motioned to her and she corrected herself and spoke of a "sad affair" which had excited the whole town.

My mother expressed a wish to the princess to the

effect that she would like to see Langenbach, who, as she explained, had stood so faithfully at her son's side on the place of combat, and from whom she wished to hear a detailed description of the goings-on, which had, until now, been purposely kept from her.

Princess Hermine promised graciously to send the captain to her, as soon as she was stronger; and in vain did I try by another sign to dissuade her from this unhappy idea.

The doctor would have to interfere. Herr von Langenbach must not see my mother. I put all my hope in the doctor's assistance, for I depended upon him to forbid this visit. I, myself, wrote a letter that same day to the princess, informing her that the doctor objected to the visit at present, and that he reserved the right to set a day for it.

My friends and acquaintances came to condole with me, and their chatter made me uneasy.

Every caller made me nervous, although I warned each one to be careful.

They expressed their regret that my engagement had been postponed owing to that sad occurrence, and each one cut me to the heart, while she thought she was saying something kind to me.

Langenbach did not hesitate to put himself forward as far as he could. He often rode past our house, once indeed upon my brother's handsome Andalusian, which the latter had presented him with.

Only once did he have the happiness of seeing me at the window, though I stepped back and pretended I had not seen him.

Everything indicated that he had not given up all hope of winning me, it even seemed to me as if the princess had mentioned this man for his own interests.

He might be counting upon my mother's weakness, or upon her promise to her son, which she would keep more faithfully than if he were living.

In almost all our connections with the outer world, I suspiciously thought I noticed his intrigues.

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Amongst the letters which had accumulated for my mother, during our troubles, I found one addressed to me.

I recognized the handwriting of our lawyer at S. But how could I find the time or mood to read it!

He, no doubt, had written about Eugenie, and could I, myself so inexpressibly wretched, take an interest in another's sorrows? Now that my mother's condition was such that I could leave her at night to the care of others, in order to regain my strength, as the doctor urged me to do, I felt inclined, upon reaching my room, to open my letter.

I had a presentiment that it contained nothing pleasant. However, I was so accustomed to worry that I could receive this news—be it what it may—with indifference.

The letter was short and bore the date of one of our days of suffering. When I unfolded it, another, which was sealed, fell into my hand, and much to my surprise the address was in Eugenie's writing.

The lawyer wrote that he had succeeded in freeing my protégée from the cross-examination, after a neighboring peasant had voluntarily come forward, and sworn that he had met the laborer, who had been suspected of the murder, at the time it took place, in quite another direction.

As this statement coincided with that of the man, he had been freed, and his client had also been set at liberty,

upon the wife of the laborer swearing that Eugenie had brought her food and money a number of times before the murder, although her husband had once insulted her and ordered her never to dare to cross his threshold again.

Eugenie had been freed on the condition that she should consider herself subject to the disposition of the court, for they had not been able to prove anything, as yet, against her.

Still, there rested upon the poor girl a certain suspicion, for she repeatedly maintained that she had found the tinder-box and that it must have been dropped by the murderer, who was not yet discovered.

The lawyer concluded with the remark that he enclosed a letter from his client, which, if she—as he was convinced—was innocent, would certainly bar her from her class of society, and leave her in a very needy and pitiable condition.

For the moment I forgot my own situation. Eugenie, free, but despised, rejected, in spite of her release proscribed by public opinion, which was not so easily appeased. And was not I obliged to confess to myself that something in my own soul spoke against her, that I felt sure she had not spoken the truth?

If public opinion misjudged her, then was I not less unjust, for justice demanded clearness, and she refused to give it!

I was persuaded to confide in my mother, who ascribed Eugenie's entire misfortune to her low extraction. Eugenie seemed to me untruthful, deceitful, at any rate, not upright and honest.

While at the castle she had always feigned the greatest candor, though she had her secrets by which she got herself into trouble. All that she had done was contra-

dictory, characterless, and culpable, even her slavish passion for my brother was despicable. At any rate it was the sign of an ordinary mind, and I now called to mind a remark which my mother, in her indignation, had made: "The wooden apple will not become a pine in paradise!" What trouble would we have been in if she had remained at our house and had been taken from our midst suspected of participation in such a terrible crime!

I owed my mother an apology! Her sharp sight had understood the girl's faults, her severity was justifiable.

Very much depressed I opened Eugenie's letter. It was written in French.

"Before God," ran the letter, "I affirm, my kind benefactress, to whom I owe my escape from this fresh trouble, that I am innocent; but God, who knew my innocence, guarded me. He gave me strength, notwithstanding all the anguish which I have borne, to keep a secret which no torture could wring from me!

"I intrust this letter to the noble man who stood so faithfully by my side; in his hands it will be safe. I am certain that it will reach you, and you, my noble friend, must destroy it as soon as you have read it. I feel it my duty, I think it only right, to clear myself at least in your eyes! The world may judge me as it will, I care not, for I am going far from here, where no one will know what has happened to me. But you I wish to think well of me, and though I may not tell you all, I shall at least say as much as I can.

"Yes, I lied to the judges. I told an untruth; I would have told it had they wished to force the truth from me on my death-bed, in the face of the Holy Sacrament!

"I witnessed that murder in the woods! I acknowledge it to you!

"My unfortunate passion for a man to whom I owe so much of my misery and degradation, yet whom I can not even now help loving, induced me to follow him to the woods one day when he went hunting.

"In my heart jealousy was raging; I knew that he often visited the forester's pretty daughter; I feared that she was not indifferent to him.

"In the woods, on his way to the forester's house, he met young Richtmann, the girl's cousin, who barred the way. Concealed behind the thicket, I heard the young forester reproach him; heard him beseech him not to ruin the girl, heard him implore him to avoid the forester's house for the sake of the girl's poor, blind father.

"Then I heard a hasty interchange of words. I saw him seize the young forester and throw him down. Then I heard a shot. I saw that when the wounded man fell, he hung his gun over his shoulder and went upon his way.

"I had the courage, when he had disappeared, to hasten to the injured man. The bullet had pierced his breast; I stood before a corpse.

"Why I did it, I know not. I reached for the small silver object, which glittered in the grass near the body, hastened with trembling limbs to hide myself, and then sank upon the grass exhausted.

"This, countess, is the truth, the whole truth, as I hope for grace in heaven! This is the truth, which I shall take with me to the grave, which I only intrust to you in the deepest secrecy, in order to be cleared from suspicion as far as you are concerned, for I could stand it no longer.

"Destroy this letter, I pray you! When it reaches you, I shall be in my native land, in France, or further still, for I think of going to Oran where a sister of my mother lives.

"I have been ordered not to leave this town, but I can not remain where all look upon me as a criminal; where I am avoided as if I were a leper. I shall fly secretly, and God will watch over me.

"Receive my thanks once again for your infinite kindness, and think sometimes compassionately of

"Your unfortunate,

"EUGENIE."

What a terrible revelation, what a horrible light upon a secret, on account of which I had only just now condemned the poor girl!

My brother—the avenging hand of Providence had directed him to end his existence, in the same wood, perhaps upon the same spot, upon which he, by his arrogant, impetuous temperament, had become a murderer!

With such a sin upon his conscience, my brother could enter into all the pleasures which this world offered him. No qualms of conscience had interfered with his enjoyment, for what to him was such an obscure thing as the life of that poor young man! No fear of discovery had disturbed his composure; for earthly justice was, according to his opinion, only for the mob, an institution necessary to keep them within bounds. A human life was worth no more to him than a soap-bubble!

Now only did I understand poor Eugenie; now for the first time did I feel as if I must beg her pardon, not my mother's, for my mother had judged her so harshly, though all the reasons for the girl's actions were unknown to her.

I felt small and mean compared with this girl's greatness of soul. From my eyes was lifted the veil which had kept me from perceiving the true worth of this unhappy creature. What devotion, what self-sacrifice,

what heroism in that love which had seemed to me so servile!

Probably gratitude toward us might have had a great deal to do with this self-sacrifice, but how much gratitude could we expect from her after she had paid what she owed us by giving up her entire happiness through that marriage which Hermann had forced her into. My heart was full. My mother should hear of the nobility of this girl whom she had condemned. And yet—on second thoughts, she must not hear of it. She would call Eugenie a liar, would look upon her letter as a cleverly invented lie, only planned to show herself in a favorable light. Later, perhaps, she might be told of it. Eugenie was lost to us forever; to raise my mother's opinion of her would probably be in vain, and would it be becoming in me to slander my brother's memory in my mother's eyes?

I myself felt the advisability of destroying Eugenie's letter. I would hide away my knowledge of the deed forever; my mother should know nothing of it.

I quickly threw the letter into the fire, and with a certain sense of satisfaction, saw the paper burn amongst the flames.

One thing I did not neglect; that night I wrote to the lawyer. I begged him to tell Eugenie to come to me, as nothing was now against her.

The next morning my letter was posted. A few days later I received an answer. Eugenie had disappeared, and public opinion, which had been more favorably inclined toward her, had again turned against her, for her disappearance was construed into a sign of guilt.

So it was that all that she did always spoke against her, and I was the only one who still stood up for her without being able to help her fight her battles with the world.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

My troubles were not yet ended, although my measure seemed overflowing.

The doctor's efforts had succeeded in restoring my mother so far, that no more danger was apprehended. One morning she was sitting in her room, awaiting me to come and read aloud to her, when suddenly a piercing cry called up the servants.

I was just finishing my toilet; breathlessly I rushed out.

The servants were standing around my mother, who was lying upon the floor, her hand convulsively clutching a newspaper.

I pushed back the servants. I threw myself beside my mother. I called her by the tenderest names. Her eyes were closed; her hands were stiff and her arms immovable. I called upon those standing about to help me. We tried to raise her—she was motionless, cold; there was not the faintest sign of life.

Almost mad with grief, I wrung my hands, called for the doctor, threw myself weeping upon my mother and tried to revive her—but all in vain.

The doctor found me upon my knees weeping and moaning. When he entered I sprang up; I hastened to meet him and led him to my mother.

"Perhaps it is only a spasm; we will hope for the best," murmured he; "but in Heaven's name, what caused it?"

In all my confusion I remembered the newspaper which

her cold hand had held. I picked it up and handed it to the doctor.

"Curse it!" he muttered between his teeth. "What we have carefully hidden from her so long, this fourteen-day-old paper has betrayed to her. How came it in her hands?" I uttered a cry of anguish. Only that morning had I succeeded in evading her questions about Hermann, and was convinced that the time must come when she could not be deceived, but, of course, she would have to be prepared for it. Now an accident, or negligence on the part of the maid, had told her all, and the result was much more serious than we had imagined it would be.

Tremblingly I watched the doctor's efforts to restore my mother. Finally he turned to me, for I had not left his side, and in his silence, in the eyes of my faithful friend, I read that I was—an orphan!

This knowledge affected me just as if an electric shock had completely paralyzed me.

All the struggling and the contention about me and my happiness, all the longings, hopes, and fears disappeared with her, who had been my companion, who had protected me even though she often gave me pain. I felt deserted, as if the world had suddenly become a desert; and with her, my mother, whom I had loved so dearly ever since I could remember, died all that was still dear to me.

The doctor, when he saw my ghastly countenance, when he saw me standing by, motionless like a statue, pressed my hand in his.

"Courage, countess!" said he to me with much warmth. "Your trial is a severe one; it is too severe not to be followed by the blessing of Providence, which you so richly deserve!"

I scarcely heard the last part of this speech. It proved to me, however, what until now he had not said, that I was orphaned. Silently I threw myself upon the body of the one whom to live without it had never seemed possible, and the only thought of which I was capable was a prayer to the messenger of death, hovering over our house, to take me, too, for he had taken my all.

At that time I learned that excess of suffering can reduce one to the condition of existing unconsciously, in which state all external influences concern one as little as a breath upon a mirror.

That day society came, the court at its head, to express its sympathy. I saw forms about me, which I recognized; I heard their voices, but what they said to me I did not understand.

They wished to take me from the house of death; I refused to go. I saw my mother in her coffin, and not a tear was in my eye. I knelt for hours, although they tried to drag me away forcibly, by her side, my hands folded, gazing before me, and the only sense of feeling that I had was, that my ear listened attentively, hoping to hear my mother's voice.

Only one thing made me cry out; it was the hammering when they closed the coffin. I asked to see my dear one once more. I pushed all those who tried to keep me back, aside but gave in meekly when I saw that it was too late.

All the sad ceremonies that were performed seemed to me like a dream, and when afterward I found myself, in quite different surroundings, it was difficult for me to understand that I was at the house of Baroness Loewen, a friend of my mother's.

I recognized the kind old lady; I knew her daughter, too, who took so much trouble to amuse me; but they

were troublesome to me, and their efforts for my sake annoyed me. They did not understand that it would have been better for me had they spared me, for I took no interest in anything then.

For weeks I was inconsolable. Although our many friends vied with one another in showing their sympathy, they exerted themselves in vain when they tried to interest me in any diversion.

The only one to whom I was accessible was Baroness Loewen's daughter, a kind, frank girl, who understood best how to treat me; she succeeded in awakening me to what was stirring in town.

She had soon found out that a drama was being played in our family. Her honest sympathy won from me an account of the motives which had caused it; and I believe she was delicate enough not even to repeat it to her mother!

The principal cause of my communication had been the boldness of Captain von Langenbach, who had asked permission to call upon me.

With undisguised aversion I refused. Dora von Loewen could not understand this, for this officer was looked upon as my betrothed; this compelled me to tell the truth. And it was well that I did so. Dora's brother was an officer, and one day she told me that he had said indignantly that Stephanie von Ebersburg, who had preferred Count von M., my brother, to any of the other courtiers, whose attentions she had received so openly, was not ashamed, so soon after Hermann's death, to receive Langenbach daily at her house; Langenbach, of whom it was now said, that he was the one, who, when Hermann had tired of this coquette, had always managed, by his machinations, to lead him back to her arms again.

Through Dora I first learned what had not been known to us during my brother's lifetime, that Stephanie's reputation had been latterly entirely undermined by rumors of her former mode of life. And what Dora could not tell me, I saw for myself, namely, that Langenbach, as I had suspected, had prejudiced my brother against Otto von Radom, only to warrant the possession of me for himself.

And this man still dared to sustain the world in its belief that I was engaged to him, that my relatives' death, had only postponed the official announcement. This man, who perhaps had some secret, objectionable alliance with Stephanie, while he furthered her plans of becoming Countess von M., who probably still maintained this secret connection with her, this man dared to appear before me!

He, only he was my brother's murderer! and he had the impertinence to hope for my hand after having caused the death of those who had so willingly "lent him their ears!"

This conviction only served to awaken my grief for the departed, for Radom, in all its violence.

They had evidently tried to ruin him, in order to have full power over me; he must be put out of the way, and Langenbach himself was too cowardly to do it. He depended upon my brother's courage and his dexterity in the use of arms, in which my father had early instructed him. By him, he expected to have the field cleared; and, dazzled by his arrogance and his susceptibility to flattery, Hermann had fallen into the trap which was to ruin him and us!

It was a matter of indifference to me if the world knew of this miserable intrigue or not; I, an unhappy woman, might have tried in vain to expose this man in

all his baseness; I would probably not have been believed.

So much the more good did it do me, when Dora's brother, his own comrade, spoke of him in a way which showed the character of this schemer in at least one light.

All the satisfaction that I could promise myself, lay in the thought that I, now mistress of my own fate, could spurn this man with the contempt which he merited, and if his aristocratic friends at court should inquire the cause, they should be informed of it.

The opportunity was soon forthcoming.

At the king's command, a guardian was appointed over me, a high, ministerial official, a venerable man, in whom I gladly confided.

He came to present himself to me in his new capacity. When he repeated his visit, he spoke of his regret at having to trouble me with business matters.

He managed to infer that he would like to have an exact knowledge of my position in regard to Captain von Langenbach, who was considered by the townspeople as my betrothed.

With a scornful air I said that must be a report which only he could have spread. I hated, I loathed the man, and the idea that he was believed to be anything to me was doubly insulting, since I had heard that he was connected with Baroness Ebersburg.

My guardian was surprised; my answer did not seem to please him.

He had evidently been prepared for this by the other side, but felt that I would not converse any further upon the subject.

He came again to tell me, with a rather perplexed air, that he was unable to prove my interests in these large

estates, for it was impossible for him to obtain an official announcement of my brother Hermann's death.

This communication puzzled me. I begged him to speak plainer. My guardian then told me that there was, of course, no doubt of my brother's death. He had gone to the castle and there taken leave of Langenbach, who accompanied him, and shut himself for several hours in his father's former study.

After that he had sent for the intendant, had given him a sealed envelope and told him that in an hour he should start upon a journey, without being able to set the time for his return. If, in the course of fourteen days, he had not come back, he would find instructions in the envelope, and should send the inclosed letter to his attorney.

Thereupon the young count had repaired, on foot, to the woods. Late that evening some villagers had come breathlessly to the castle, and had said that they heard a shot quite near them, as they were passing through the woods on their way home.

As they hurried up to the spot, they saw the groom, with the body of the young count in his arms, walk towards the underwood and vanish. A pool of blood, on the same spot upon which, not long before, the forester, Richtmann, had been murdered, proved to them that either the groom had shot his master, or that a suicide had been committed.

Upon this announcement, the intendant had opened the envelope and had found a note from the young count, in which he informed his intendant that he was obliged to end his life on account of an affair of honor in which he had drawn the death-lot. His groom, George, had been instructed by him, where to take his body.

So the intendant had written in two letters, which were sent at once to my mother after this sad affair, but had

not been opened, and were forwarded to my guardian with the rest of my mother's correspondence.

Since then nothing further had been heard. His corpse had disappeared, the groom was nowhere to be found. They tried in vain to find out where the latter had taken the body. At first the suspicion had arisen that George had abused the dead man's confidence, robbed him, and then flown, but the young count had himself said in his letter "that his ready-money and his valuables would be found in his strong box."

Finally they decided that George had fled into the underwood to bury the body in an unknown spot, but this was not very plausible, for such a weak fellow as George could not possibly carry it far.

All inquiries were useless. What did this secrecy mean?

My brother was not naturally inclined to be mysterious, but this George, in whom, as a child, I had recognized an unprincipled, low fellow, was capable, in my eyes, of any crime.

With a shudder I thought of the confirmation of my suspicion that Hermann had ended his life on the same spot upon which he had shot poor Richtmann. Had Hermann perceived the avenging hand of Providence, as it led him to that spot, or was it at the last moment defiance of fate, which caused him to select it?

Death had entirely reconciled me to my brother, but I did not forget the living one on that account, with blasphemy on his lips, trampling upon all the laws of mankind, worshiping himself as the only God, and I saw in my mind the proud gallant going to his death with an air of having chosen it himself, as if he were indifferently paying the penalty of a bet of a game at dice.

And indeed he had not changed countenance in the least, so that he need feel lowered in his own estimation; he died as he had lived, a thoroughbred baron, who knew no law but his own will.

The communications of my guardian relating to material matters had no interest for me. I listened to him, without hearing; I was grateful to him for all the trouble with which he had burdened himself for my sake, and only asked one favor: That he leave no stone unturned to raise the mystery which the disappearance of my brother's body occasioned.

With every day, with every sun which rose milder and pleasanter, for spring was coming, with every warm breeze which announced to the world new life and greeted me in my solitary walks, with every note of the lark, I grew uneasier.

My grief for my mother and brother turned gradually to a deep, affectionate memory of the dead, but my loneliness increased. There were hours when I would lock myself in my room to weep, then there were hours when I would rebel against fate—and again there were hours—ah! those were the best, and yet the most painful—when I thought of the man who had grown dearer to me since I had lost him!

All the reproaches that I had heaped upon him so that I might persuade myself to forget him, disappeared in the certainty that he, as well as my brother, had been Langenbach's victim. But hand in hand with this certainty was the feeling that he was lost to me, that nothing could bring him back to me. And even if some power should lead him to return, who and what could bridge over the gulf which lay between us?

Two graves rose between us! He was probably wandering about in some wilderness; my solitude, too, was a

desert. I was often seized with the feeling that I must go to him, that I must seek him as long as my feet could carry me, as long as there was breath in my body; I would cling to him, share his exile, his poverty, would hide in some corner of the world with him, would be nameless like him, and happy in the knowledge of being with him.

But those were wild phantasies which often excited my mind to the verge of madness, followed by the greatest hopelessness and doubt, which, at times, so worried my faithful, self-sacrificing doctor, that he scarcely left my side.

In the meantime he endeavored to impress upon me that only change of scene would restore my peace of mind; he arranged everything so that I could accompany Dora and her mother to Montreux; he told me that the sight of people who had been intimate at our house continually re-opened my wounds.

I was indifferent to his arguments; circumstances matured my plans, which were to cross his.

That which occupied my mind the most, the recovery of my brother's body, seemed to trouble the rest very little. When I inquired, my guardian complained of the slowness and dullness of the authorities. On the other hand all took an interest in me whose condition filled all with the deepest compassion.

Princess Hermine began to develop a lively interest in me. "Poor child," said she one day as she visited me for the third time, "how gladly would I restore to you what you have lost!"

I was often invited to walk with her; I had to sit opposite her in her carriage, when in the first early days of spring she took her drives. The older ladies of our circle also began to make me the object of their sympathy; one

vied with the other in comforting, in diverting the poor orphan; I was drawn into the whirlpool of amusement; the court gallants and officers surrounded me, all with the ostensible effort of making me forget my sorrow. The king and queen themselves, so they told me oftener than I cared to hear, took a great interest in me, and in the background I saw—Langenbach, who now played the sentimental, looked at me from a respectful distance with dreamy eyes, and tried to make his manner as noticeable as possible. However, I soon learnt to tell which was real sympathy and which was feigned. But I was perplexed when Dora's mother, with the greatest care, tried to touch a chord which she should have avoided.

She, too, seemed to have allowed herself to be drawn into the conspiracy, the aim of which was to work for "poor Langenbach," who had really been engaged to me, whose "entire happiness" had been wrecked, because I had lost "all interest" in him at my relatives' death.

Such was the declaration which Madame von Loewen, as the "echo of society," so she styled herself, made to me one day, when she thought me less reserved and more composed. It gave me an opportunity to explain all fully.

In the midst of this general interest an aversion possessed me against those, who, perhaps, truly sympathized with me; even Dora I mistrusted, for she avoided mentioning Langenbach's name, while formerly she had taken his part and made no secret of it.

So only one was left to me who received my whole confidence—my kind, faithful doctor, who stood so indefatigably by me. From him I had no secrets, and I confessed to him that to myself I seemed like a hunted deer, surrounded upon all sides.

At first he would not listen to such a thing, and tried to convince me that I was unjust to those who so kindly interested themselves in me; he said that he thought their sympathy genuine.

I understood him too well not to know that he was only trying to soothe me. I clung to him; I confided in him my plan, which had in the past few weeks grown into a firm determination, and besought him to help me.

One morning, eight days afterward, I stood ready for a journey with my maid. I told Frau von Loewen that for some time I had felt it my sacred duty to pray by my mother's side, as her body had been placed in our family vault without my being able to accompany it thither. I wished to spend the spring at my castle and would return in the summer; the country-air, the doctor said, would benefit me.

It was Frau von Loewen's intention that Dora should go with me. I saw through that worthy lady's purpose. I was not to be let out of their sight. The day before, when I had advised her of my intention, she had paid some hurried visits to town, and in the afternoon several ladies accidentally dropped in, who were very much astonished at the news, and whom I had to promise to return as soon as I had regained my strength, and my affairs at the castle were arranged. I promised Frau von Loewen to let Dora know as soon as everything was ready for her reception, as our castle had been very much neglected.

I was obliged to tell a falsehood; but here where all were deceitful it did not matter so much. I must get away—quickly; the ground burnt my feet!

Up to the last moment I feared that something might occur to detain me. I therefore trembled at every sound that approached my door.

Upon taking leave of her, Frau von Loewen looked at me mistrustfully. She may have noticed my anxiety; I saw that she had thought in vain of some means of detaining me; that up to the very last she had hoped that something would intervene. But who would have dared to stop the way of a daughter about to make a journey to her mother's grave!

When I knew that the town lay behind me, I breathed freely; still my pilgrimage was a sorrowful one. I longed to pray by my mother's grave, in that gloomy vault where the parents still awaited their son, who had not yet been found. I was on my way to a place which would recall my happy days; I, the only one who remained of the three, whose heart was so weary that I would gladly have rested by their sides.

Once again I wished to see this place, and then—for the future, at my earnest desire, my loyal, old friend had provided.

CHAPTER XXIX.

My arrival at the castle was of course a surprise. The intendant met me with visible embarrassment. All assembled in astonishment in the courtyard, and only Gertrude, the housekeeper, received me with undisguised pleasure.

They thought I had come to live at the castle. Therefore I told the intendant and overseer that I only proposed to make a short stay; and asked the former to give me some rooms in his house for a time, for to live alone in that large castle was to me impossible.

The intendant offered to send a messenger at once to my brother's attorney who lived in town. I asked him

not to do so, for I did not feel disposed to bother with business matters.

He seemed glad of it.

That evening Gertrude asked for an audience. I readily received her. From her I learned that all inquiries after the groom who had disappeared had been vain; also that they had heard nothing of my brother's body; however, she added in a whisper, she suspected that the intendant knew more about the affair than he would communicate. Perhaps, she continued, it was to this man's interest to keep the matter in the dark as long as possible; still she had no occasion to think him unfaithful or covetous.

Upon my asking if she had heard anything about Eugenie's disappearance, she answered hesitatingly. She seemed unwilling to speak of her, and finally confessed to me that Eugenie, upon the day on which my brother returned to the castle to end his life, had suddenly made her appearance, and as suddenly vanished.

She had been seen at twilight several times upon the streets, but had left no traces behind her.

Another mystery!

To me she had written that she was about to return to France. Her husband, the schoolmaster, Gertrude said, had moved away, and had a position at a place upon the coast five miles distant.

What could possess Eugenie to remain in this neighborhood secretly!

A very uneasy sensation had come over me since I had set foot upon my paternal ground. I, the mistress of these vast domains, felt like a stranger; the people who were about me, my inferiors, made a hostile impression upon me, though I had no cause for this, for everything was as we had left it and in the best order.

It must have been the mystery concerning my brother's body which made me so nervous.

He had left the castle to end his life and no one knew anything further.

They told me all the smallest details, they uttered the most absurd suppositions, and by means of all this made me more discomposed.

No sleep came to my eyes that night.

My brother arose before me once when I half dozed, with a gaping wound in his breast, and next him was the unfortunate Richtmann in the same condition. Then I saw Eugenie in the same blue dress in which she was carried to the fisher's hut when taken from the water; I heard her cry: "*Faut pas punis celui-là!*" and then I awoke.

The next morning the intendant informed me that at my request he had had the vault lighted and asked when I wished to visit it.

My heart beat violently at this question; I drew a deep breath. "At once," answered I, "Gertrude shall accompany me!" With trembling limbs I entered the chapel which my father had built above the vault, and to which he had brought the sarcophagi of our ancestors.

I grew dizzy as the cold, icy air surrounded me; I was obliged to lean upon Gertrude for support, and to close my eyes at the sight of the bright lights shining upon the gilding of the sarcophagi.

Gertrude carefully led me to the background.

I stood before a catafalque, ornamented with the freshest and most beautiful spring flowers, upon which thick wax-tapers in candelabra shed their beams.

I passed half an hour in fervent prayer. I implored my mother for pardon, for my disobedience had contributed to her death. Then I thought I felt a hand

upon my brow, and heard my mother's voice saying: "Paula, bring my son to my side!"

I shivered. The dampness of the vault made me chilly. When I raised my head one of the forget-me-nots in a wreath upon the sarcophagus caught in my hair. I broke it off and laid it next my bosom.

Then Gertrude conducted me to my father's coffin.

The flowers upon it had long ago withered, and only the immortelles looked out from amongst the dead blossoms and leaves.

I felt calmer, as I knelt at the foot of the coffin. But the tears coursed down my cheeks. I recalled the day upon which Hermann and I had stood here next my mother, when my father was laid to his last rest.

Now they were united. By their side Hermann should rest. The sarcophagus was there awaiting him.

Gertrude again approached me. She handed me two large wreaths of white roses which she had obtained from the conservatories. Silently I laid them upon the coffins of my beloved ones.

Covering my face with my hands, sobbing aloud, I was led away by Gertrude, and when I breathed the fresh, pure spring air outside, I sank upon a stone bench in the Campo Santo.

Orphaned!—Forsaken!—alone in the great world!

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I could not bear to enter the castle in which everything reminded me of my lost happiness. With infinite woe in my heart I sat that afternoon at the window and looked upon the stone colossus, and as I sat there I seemed to see at the windows of the castle, whose blinds had been opened in my honor, passing to and fro behind the heavy damask curtains the shadowy forms of—my father, my mother, Hermann, Eugenie, myself.

What had become of all the pomp and splendor that once reigned supreme at this court! Quietly and silently the men and the maids now crossed the court; the equipages that had once stopped before the persons had disappeared, and the wild vine, whose withered branches hung from the eaves, seemed to me like a dying weeping-willow.

I, too, should have died had I remained there! An anxious uneasiness kept me in a kind of fever. I felt strange in my home, and worse still—I was afraid, I knew not of what. I must go, and even the one night that I was compelled to spend there inspired me with fear, for I dreaded the visions that would certainly appear to me when I closed my eyes. My mission was fulfilled. I owed to myself that a second visit to the vault would be beyond my strength. The next morning, bright and early, I should continue my journey alone, without my maid, who could remain in Gertrude's care. I had only about ten miles to travel to reach the convent in which my friend, the worthy doctor, had procured me a shelter.

No one should discover where I was; not at any rate until I had succeeded in gaining my strength; until I had succeeded in entirely forgetting the past.

Two days later I reached the convent. I was grateful to my friend and adviser, for I felt that here, in this paradise, here, in this calm peacefulness, where every morning and evening Hosannas were sung to the Almighty—all dissonance would be at an end; all rancor against fate would be appeased; and the heart's wounds must be healed.

And so it was with me. I gained by my intercourse with the prioress, a lady who herself must have suffered greatly, a certain degree of composure, an even frame of mind, which showed the mind's gradual recovery; and

when often a deep sigh escaped me, or a longing for my loved ones, or for the man whom I could never forget possessed me, I felt a certain satisfaction, a certain pride in conquering those feelings.

The recording of my diary awoke my old troubles.

I tried to overcome this by persuading myself that I was writing the fate of others. Still my destiny, like that of my companion and my friend, led to Golgotha!

When I had finished the record of my life, when I had no other employment with which to occupy my mind, then the old painful longing began to work within me. The nights, which had lately passed calmly, were again enlivened by visions, from amongst which stood out most prominently that of my lost Otto.

The conception of what had become of him robbed me of my sleep. I could not remain in my room; I wandered about in the darkness in the park; I walked along the edge of the small pond, from amongst whose rushes I roused the dragon-flies, which flew about me.

At such times I saw Eugenie, as she was drawn from the lake; and when I stood there listening, or when I threw myself upon the grass and covered my eyes with both hands, it seemed as if I heard Otto's voice whisper in my ear:

"Paula, could you forget me?"

Time certainly assuages grief, but that is no grief which can be healed in months! I was yet too young to possess the strength and self-dependence which my isolation demanded under the sad circumstances; I could at times attain this strength, but it left me as soon as my heart recommenced its stormy desires.

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My misfortune seemed even to follow me into my solitude. Pale with terror I stood one morning at my

window. I saw Stephanie von Ebersburg in a plain, modest dress, by the side of the prioress, walking in the garden! How came she here! What drove her to this asylum, she who was accustomed to shine as the sun in the firmament!

I trembled at the thought that she might be an embassadress of Langenbach; of that man of whose perseverance in the pursuit of an aim I was aware.

I did not dare to inquire about her; however, I heard that Baroness von Ebersburg had sought shelter here for a short time in order to recruit her strength in the calm of our Eden.

That might only be a pretext.

Still eight days passed without my noticing anything suspicious in her manner, as I watched her from my room.

Stephanie evidently sought solitude. She took long walks, always alone, and only returned when evening had drawn to a close and midnight was near.

I supposed that she had seen me or knew of my presence. She, however, did not take any notice of it, and I carefully avoided her.

When I went out at evening; when I—perhaps effected by her appearance—could not rest upon my pillow; when the old longing possessed me, and I was obliged to seek rest; as I wandered about the great convent park after dark, fear associated itself with my grief; fear that I might meet her upon my solitary walks; that she might suddenly stand before me, and what then?

Nothing had ever taken place between us. We had become strangers, and my brother's death had freed me from her net. But what I had learnt about her from Dora gave me cause to flee from her, to hold her in contempt.

From the moment that she appeared I felt that my peace was gone, and what I dreaded came to pass.

But not what I had hoped for, not what I had dared to hope for. I was grateful to her for her appearance here; I blessed the moment when I saw her in the shadow, seated on a bench, her arm about the neck of a young man kneeling before her, who looked up at her with a deathly pale face, a face that froze the blood in my veins, that silenced a cry of fear upon my lips, for that face was a dead man's—it was Hermann's face!

I became unconscious. I awoke, paralyzed in all my limbs, on the spot upon which this face, this group appeared to me. Hours had passed since then.

The arbor was empty. The moon shone just as brightly on the gravel. Everything about me was as still as death.

I dragged myself out of the grove into the arbor; I sank upon the old, mossy stone bench, and supported my burning head in my hands in order to picture that face more clearly.

Was it a vision of my morbid, heated brain? Of course! For days I had felt ill, feverishly excited. I had eaten and drunk very little, and ought really to have kept my bed. And the consequence was this vision, this horrible dream!

My imagination had, at the sight of Stephanie, conjured up my brother before my eyes, and he was naturally pale, as pale as death!

This conviction quieted me in some measure. I tried to regain my composure, made up my mind not to leave my bed the next day, and arose.

Then my eyes fell upon the footprints in the sand at my feet. I stared at the sand, I exactly recalled the group as I had seen it not twenty feet from me.

“God, graciously enlighten me,” cried I, raising my

hands to my head. "Hermann is dead, and if he is dead, who was it who lay at her feet, whose face was that of my own brother, which terrified me when it should have filled my heart with joy, if it were no apparition!"

Hermann still amongst the living! that would give Radom his life, and me mine.

But it was impossible! It was a phantom! and yet, those prints in the sand at my feet—and there, there on the edge of the lawn lay a dark object.

I stooped. It was a fine, dark, lady's glove! Stephanie had been here. Without doubt! But it was my imagination which had pictured to me my brother in her arms, for Hermann was dead!

"Dead? Yes, yes!" cried I. "Dead! Who saw his corpse?" I had seen my brother's face too plainly for it to have been a vision; I saw only too clearly that Stephanie had her arm about his neck. This group was so fresh in my memory, that if there were any mistake possible, it must have been in the features. And again! was it likely that a sister could mistake a stranger's face for that of her brother?

I sat there a long time, racking my brain, and finally took the homeward path, taking the glove with me, which was to serve me as a proof of the truth of my discovery.

CHAPTER XXX.

Early the next morning I was at my window. I shivered. Excitement had given me a fever.

Instead of seeking out Stephanie, of demanding the truth from her, which she owed me as his sister, I could not bring myself to leave my room. I said I was ill,

remained the whole day between four walls, and awaited the evening anxiously.

Night, which generally veils all things, was to bring me clearness.

A presentiment warned me that another crisis of my life was at hand, that I was to be put to the test again.

The night had almost drawn to a close when I finished reading my diary. I stepped to the window; I breathed the fresh night air, which bore to me the perfume of the flowers in the park. Did Hermann live? Was he near me? Had he been awakened from death by this Circe, to fall a victim again to her allurements?

Although the thought that Hermann might be alive pleased me, I shuddered when I looked into the lucid clouds which occasionally veiled the moon; I shuddered when I pictured to myself that group.

Was it my brother's ghost, or was it he come to life again? His face was so deathly pale; and the tone of his voice, which I thought I had heard before I lost consciousness, had not that clear, haughty sound; it was faint, tremulous and hollow, and produced with difficulty; there was nothing ghostly about it, and yet it was not like the voice of a living man; there was not that metallic ring in it which had made my brother's voice so strong, so commanding.

And now—did not the same faint sound of which I was thinking, reach my ear from below?

I started. I listened. An illusion of the mind might have borne to me the echo of that voice. I bent over under the eaves of the window, which would hide me if any one were really down there. I strained my eyes in order to pierce the darkness, which was occasioned by the clouds.

Some one whispered down there. I heard steps on the gravel. A broad streak of light fell from between the clouds upon the *ahorn-allée*, from whence issued two figures arm-in-arm—the same whom I thought I had surprised in the arbor.

That was Stephanie! and next her, a tall, slender, manly form—"Hermann!" I cried, but not aloud, for my lips refused to utter a sound.

I was greatly perplexed and inexpressibly agitated. I wanted certainty, but how was I to obtain it?

Once again I looked out to convince myself, that my eyes, my ears, had not deceived me.

They had both disappeared in the *allée*.

I must go out. This time I was positive, I was fully conscious that it was no delusion. I had the right to know if my brother was still alive!

How could I manage it? Stephanie no doubt used the small back gate in order to get out for her nocturnal walks, by bribing the gate-keeper. This gate must be opened to re-admit her.

I decided quickly; wrapped myself in a dark waterproof; drew the hood over my head; went out into the broad, dark corridor; groped along the cold, stone walls; reached a narrow hall which led to a flight of narrow, steep steps, and by means of these reached the little gate.

I pressed lightly on the massive bolt. It yielded, and to my delight I found myself under the ivy which hid the gate from outside.

Scarcely had I reached the open air, when I felt as if I must call my brother's name aloud—but fear stifled my voice. I felt as if I were wandering at night in a cemetery; a fear of ghosts, such as I had felt when a child, possessed me. The convent seemed so ghostly to me,

the scent of the flowers which the prioress so carefully tended, seemed death-like, and over there in the *ahorn-allée* walked the ghosts—and now I sought them in vain. I had succeeded in finding a hiding-place under a weeping mountain-ash which stood in the middle of the lawn. Here I threw the hood of my cloak from my head. I was almost suffocated and was obliged to cool my face in the night air. I clung to the trunk of the tree. I strained my eyes. The moonlight cast a mist before them. The trees in the *allée* seemed to change places. A soft night-breeze blowing amongst the leaves cast shadows on the path; in the quiet which surrounded me, a dead ash-leaf startled me, as it fell upon the sand.

I saw nothing positive, yet I saw so many things, I was not in a condition to know what I really did see. Fear was joined with my excitement.

The face which I thought I saw so plainly from my window had vanished. The maple trees were playing at hide-and-seek; the branches swayed by the wind, or rather the shadows of the same, seized one another and escaped respectively, but the two forms were no longer there.

My fear changed to anxiety. I was quite alone in the great convent park, in the flower-garden, which adorned the façade of the building. Down there toward the neighboring village lay the pond, and on both sides stretched the paths to the woods, which were no longer enclosed by walls, for they had long ago crumbled away. I wished to hasten back to my room, but I feared to make a step.

Suddenly the tower-clock in the village gave out a number of strokes, the first of which made me start. I wished to take advantage of the last strokes, in order,

like a timid child, to reach the convent while they were sounding, when another face arose before me.

The tall, slender form of a man, at times lighted up by the moon, came slowly up the *allée*. It must have appeared quite suddenly in the middle of the *allée*, for it arose as if out of the earth.

Now this form stepped out of the *allée* on to the adjoining lawn. Perfectly erect it stood there, put its hands to its eyes, looked over to me, seemed to have discovered me, and then let its arm drop.

"Sir Arthur Wardley!" cried I, inaudibly, clinging closer to the tree-trunk.

That was Sir Arthur's form—that was his handsome face—that was his blonde beard. How in the name of Heaven came he here? It was probably some new illusion, and I felt positive that what I had seen before was the same.

I was in such a condition that only one thing was clear to me; that I was clinging to the tree-trunk with both hands, with closed eyes, and my forehead pressed against the trunk. By that means I thought I should be able to recover, to collect my thoughts, to gain strength and composure, so that I might get the better of that illusion, and again seek my room.

Then suddenly I heard a soft, scarcely audible sound, like steps on the lawn.

I closed my eyes tightly, but grew more nervous. I heard quite plainly and quite near me, a low, melodious voice saying:

"Countess von M., it is I, Arthur Wardley!"

The same slightly English accent was in those words, as when I heard Sir Arthur speak once before. This accent was so impressed upon my memory, that I fancied he was close to my ear.

Some seconds passed, during which I was seized with a kind of giddiness.

"If I am mistaken in the person, I beg your pardon!" I heard the same voice say.

Ghosts speak not so. Swift as lightning the thought passed through my mind, that I was standing opposite a human being.

I opened my eyes wide; I gathered all my courage in order to look in the direction from whence the voice came.

There stood Sir Arthur Wardley, who inclined his head slightly, upon seeing that I noticed him. The moon shone brightly; his face, his form not to be mistaken.

"Gracious countess," again said the pleasant voice, though in an undertone and carefully, "I again beg your pardon if I annoy you. Circumstances will justify my appearance."

Circumstances! So Sir Arthur had been called hither by circumstances!

"Is it really you—Sir Wardley?" asked I, in a voice still tremulous with fear—and still doubting that it was he.

"It is I, gracious countess," said Sir Arthur's voice. "I thank Providence for leading me to you, if it *is* at an unwonted hour and upon this spot, to which perhaps the same interest led us."

"Sir Wardley," answered I, gradually recovering from my fright, "the strange hour of the night forces me to acknowledge that something brought me here of which I am ashamed, which will make me appear childish to you, if not—"

I could find no words with which to explain to this man why I was there alone at night.

Sir Arthur came to my assistance.

"May I ask, countess, what induced you to come to this convent?"

"Flight from a world which was loathsome to me, the desire to be far from it and alone."

"No other motive?" asked he, with peculiar emphasis and a doubtful air.

"None!" answered I, surprised, looking into his face.

"Not the presence of your brother in the village below?"

"My brother!" cried I, forgetting our situation, "My brother lives? Is it true? I beseech you to speak!"

"Did you not know that your brother lives?"

"Lives?" cried I, as a feeling of infinite joy agitated me.

Involuntarily, unknown to myself, I seized Sir Arthur's hand, and pressed it in mine, thus mutely thanking him for his words.

Sir Arthur seemed convinced by that, that I spoke the truth.

"Strange!" said he, half to himself, "and yet that may be accounted for."

"Sir Wardley!" I continued, imploringly, "You surely know what a sister's right is—I know nothing, but that they sought my brother's corpse in vain—"

Silently, and with a polite bow, Sir Arthur took my arm and led me to a seat near, in the shadow of a group of trees, and seated himself next me.

"They should therefore, as I did, seek for the living, who are indeed often more difficult to find than the dead," said he calmly. "To me, countess, when I read in the newspapers that Count von M.'s body had mysteriously disappeared, it was a two-fold duty to clear up the mystery, for I was the private attorney of my dear friend, whose entire future depended upon the life or death of this man. I therefore immediately left my

post, which I wished to leave anyway, in order to follow my friend, the traces of whom I never had lost. I am independent, and could therefore get away.

“My first inquiries I made at your castle. The intendant received me, grateful for my pains, as I gave out that I was a friend of your brother. At that time, eight days had passed since the catastrophe. With his co-operation, I succeeded in sounding the peasants who had seen the groom disappear in the thicket with your brother's bloody body. Led by them, I followed the trail.

“Upon the way the thought did not desert me that the groom had been informed beforehand by his master of the motive of his suicide. I could not believe the general opinion that the groom had had plans for his own advantage; I rather suspected an understanding between the two, which the confidence between master and man, as portrayed to me by the intendant, justified.

“Caution inspired me with the thought of depending entirely upon myself, and to that caution do I owe the solution of a mystery, which, I see, would have remained such even to you.

“I left the castle and repaired to the small, neighboring town; heard there the different views of the people concerning the strange affair; heard of the awkward, unsuccessful attempts of the police; read their official announcements, and engaged apartments in an hotel opposite the house of the doctor who attended Count von M.'s family.

“Instinct and chance combined had guided me aright. I saw the doctor drive away two evenings in the same direction at a certain hour, and return very late. The third evening I had a horse ready to follow him at a distance.

"That evening also, the doctor's carriage took the same direction. It led me, as I had supposed it would, in the neighborhood of the castle, then took another road and stopped before a palatial building, which must have stood there years unfinished—"

"My poor father's mansion, the erection of which was interrupted by his death," I uttered, involuntarily. "It was intended for my brother."

"Just so. So I was told. I was convinced that my suspicion was confirmed. The servant must have succeeded in dragging the half-dead man to that place; that assured me that, as ten days thereafter, the doctor still visited there, the Count von M., although perhaps fatally wounded, was still alive.

"I need not tell you, countess, how loudly, how joyfully my heart beat at this discovery. The character of one of the most horrible duels on record might now be changed by the gracious disposition of God.

"The laws of honor had been satisfied; if Count von M. were alive, then could my poor friend return to life—

"I understand you, countess," continued Sir Arthur, whom I had interrupted by a cry of joy which escaped me. "My first thoughts turned to the possibility of a reconciliation, were it even to take place at the death-bed of one of the rivals. Let me continue. I saw the doctor drive away in half an hour; saw an empty basket being carried to the conveyance by a man, and thought I recognized in him the Count von M.'s servant who had accompanied him at the Residence upon his rides.

"At any rate, the doctor was in the secret, so that the servant could care for his master.

"Count von M. had forfeited his life, and if he were alive it must be kept secret; perhaps even the doctor's help had been called for against the will of the

wounded man—so I concluded from what I later heard and saw.

“For hours I loitered about the half-finished building, which, at the most, contained only a few inhabitable rooms, that had been occupied by the surveyor; I saw a light in one of the rooms; I heard low voices in the corridor; there must be several people about the wounded man; indeed, I saw the face of a young woman, who opened a window to let in the fresh air.

“The next morning I called upon the doctor. I stated to him that a friend of mine, who had been seriously injured in a duel, was in a castle near by. I begged him to accompany me to him quickly, as my carriage was waiting, and asked him to maintain the deepest secrecy.

“The doctor was startled. The details which I gave him surprised him; he saw that the secret had been betrayed, and wished to know who I was. I had no occasion to hide that, and informed him that I was in the secret, and it was most important to me that it be preserved. This brought him to terms, and from that time forth I was daily informed of the condition of his patient, whose wound was very dangerous, as the bullet, which had been directed toward his heart, by pressure upon the lock of the weapon, had glanced off and probably injured his lungs.

“The doctor said that he might recover, but that his days were numbered. As for the rest, he was being tended with the greatest of care by a young woman, a French woman, who had been brought up in the count’s family.”

“Eugenie!” cried I. “It is Eugenie!”

“So I heard her called, countess. She has devoted herself to nursing the count with the most praiseworthy

assiduity, and only to this assiduity, says the doctor, will he owe his recovery, if he can be kept alive."

"Eugenie! Eugenie!" whispered I to myself. "Always Eugenie! But how came she to penetrate the mystery?" I added aloud.

"That I do not know, countess; I believe I have heard that she followed the groom that evening, and from the very first, has undertaken the care of the count."

"That was why we could not find her—noble, self-sacrificing soul!"

Sir Arthur did not understand my exclamation, or paid no attention to it.

"After my first visit to the doctor, I telegraphed to New York in the care of the business house with which my friend, Otto von Radom, is connected. I told him to await a letter from me in New York, and sent one off by the next steamer. In that letter I entreated him to return at once; I represented to him that by the deed of Count von M., in which evidently God had been with us, the matter was settled; I implored him not to be implacable toward himself; not to destroy himself by a false feeling of honor. I told him that his life had been saved at the same time as Count von M.'s, and concluded with the hope, yes, with the command, which I, as attorney in this matter, considered my right, that he would return. I knew that he would come, for I knew what he had suffered."

"Is he here? Sir Wardley, has he arrived?" I interrupted eagerly.

"Yes, countess! He has come, but does not dare to appear before you, as long as no reconciliation has taken place between him and your brother."

What I felt at that moment can not be expressed in words. My heart exulted; I could not control

myself, although I tried not to betray my delight to Sir Arthur.

"But—my brother," I was finally able to gasp, "my brother, how came he here? What led him to this"—

"I know not!" interrupted Sir Arthur, with a stern air and an appearance of displeasure. "I only surmise that, borne down by suffering and loneliness, he placed his secret in hands which were unworthy of it."

I understood his meaning; he referred to Stephanie, and wished me to know that they both had chosen the seclusion of this neighborhood—she, the convent, and he, the neighboring village, so that, as he was able to take the ten-mile ride, they might meet one another surreptitiously. What was kept secret from the sister, she might know; and the sister was left to mourn her brother as dead. Hermann, notwithstanding his present condition, was just the same as ever.

In the meantime, another question was on my tongue, which I only ventured to approach in a round-about way. Sir Arthur very likely had expected it.

"And—Herr von Radom—where is he?"

My voice trembled.

"To-morrow, gracious countess," said Sir Arthur, rising, "I hope I shall be able to answer that question. Allow me to escort you back."

Sir Arthur offered me his arm, which I timidly and silently refused.

"I must return as I came. No one must see me, still less you, Sir Wardley."

He seemed to agree with me. Very deliberately and ceremoniously he led me back to the *allée* and left me with a respectful inclination, considerately waiting under the trees, and watching me until I had disappeared under the shadow of the old wall.

As I, after reaching my room undetected, looked down from my window upon the garden and park, quiet reigned below. The soft night wind gently swayed the branches of the maples to and fro, and cast variable shadows upon the gravel; in the flower-beds the buds inclined toward one another, and in the distance the frog's melancholy tones were to be heard.

For hours I sat at my window. I wished to see Stephanie return. She came not. My heart joyously awaited the morning.

Hermann lived; Radom was perhaps quite near me. Instead of seeking repose, I threw myself beside my bed upon my knees, and besought God to make my brother well, and to bless that noble friend's attempt to bring about a reconciliation, and also to bless that same friend who had that night brought me such welcome news.

CHAPTER XXXI.

How far had I been from believing that I should yet bless Stephanie's appearance at our peaceful convent!

My brother lived! So far recovered as his injured lungs would allow, the old passion for Stephanie had again possessed him. Unaware of my presence here, they had met in my immediate neighborhood, and Sir Arthur had followed my brother hither.

The former kept his promise to me. That morning while I, very much agitated, and racked alternately by pleasure and pain, awaited Sir Arthur's message, he was bringing matters to a head.

With all the tenacity and determination of which he was capable, he appeared before my brother the next morning, as he was preparing to take his morning walk.

Hermann, suffering, and only a shadow of his former self, received him—so I learned later—standing erect, defiance in his eyes, as if the Englishman's presence were an insult to him, as if he saw in him a warning which was unnecessary. Yet his face betrayed a certain anxiety, as if he felt guilty, because he was still amongst the living.

"You are aware, sir count," began Sir Arthur, with imperturbable equanimity, "that the mandate given me by my friend, Baron von Radom, has not yet expired, and by virtue of the same I am here to-day, as your attorney is not in town."

Hermann examined him from head to foot, while Sir Arthur had an opportunity to notice the deathly pallor upon my brother's emaciated face.

"You are right, sir," answered he, in a firmer voice. "Receive my apologies and the assurance that uncalled-for assistance and interference have prolonged a life to which I have no right, and to end which your presence affords me a chance."

Hermann turned, laid his hand upon a case, opened the same, and wanted to take out one of the pistols that were in it.

Silently, but authoritatively, Sir Arthur laid his hand upon the weapon.

"Not for one second have I doubted," said he, calmly, "that Count von M. would forget his duty as a cavalier; in fact, I know that he has carried out all instructions to the letter, and consider it only right that I should acknowledge it to him. My part it was, sir count, to see that what was ordained was carried out. When I saw that Providence had guided the bullet which was directed against your heart, I was justified in considering the matter fully settled, yes, in opposing all further action.

Therefore, I called my unhappy friend from across the ocean, and am to-day before you to ask in his name a reconciliation, sir count, which you can not very well refuse! Take my hand, sir count; its pressure shall interpret my admiration, and my friend's honorable intentions, which you can not reject."

Hesitating, undecided, struggling with himself, Hermann stood there.

Sir Arthur's offer may have seemed in his eyes magnanimity, which his pride refused to accept; his pride which even his suffering had not broken.

"You hesitate, sir count," ventured Sir Arthur. "It is certainly not my right to remind you that you thought to find an enemy to your family in one of the noblest, best and most honorable of men, because the intrigues of others pointed him out to you as such—intrigues by which you are now surrounded, or rather *were* surrounded, for I doubt if Baroness von Ebersburg will show herself again in this neighborhood when she has seen me, for since this morning I have no cause to avoid the light."

Hermann listened haughtily and suspiciously. His gaze, which had rested upon the ground, was now raised to Sir Arthur.

"When I first had the honor, sir count," continued the latter, "of seeing her in Paris, this undeniably beautiful, yes, wonderfully beautiful woman, was in a position, which she did not hesitate to leave without any scruples or any consideration for her honorable family, to take the road which in Paris is called the '*chemin du paradis*.' I, who had just won my diplomatic spurs, was permitted to lend her a helping hand, for which she thanked me with a few lines which were only signed with her Christian name, though it gave me some of her hand-writing.

Allow me to hand this to you. I have never ceased to regret that such a lovely woman could stray from the path of virtue. I gladly congratulated her, when I saw her in Paris, upon having captivated such a gallant cavalier as Count von M.; but since she has plotted against my friend, Radom, who once saw her in Paris; since she in conjunction with Captain von Langenbach, as I am ready to prove, conspired against my friend's happiness and honor; since I have seen her here in the same capacity; I do not consider myself bound to any discretion."

Hermann's pale countenance during Sir Arthur's speech was several times suffused with a deep, hectic blush.

Hesitatingly he took the scented note, cast a glance at it, crushed it, and let it fall upon the floor.

"I am ready, sir count, to give Captain von Langenbach satisfaction for what I have said, in case you, as his friend, demand it. This hand I offer you, sir count, in the name of Baron von Radom, with the assurance of complete disinterestedness, of the acknowledgment of the chivalry of his opponent, whom from this time forth he will be proud to call his friend."

Sir Arthur's words were probably chosen with diplomatic shrewdness, in order to flatter my brother's vanity.

It had the desired effect; still, he seemed to mistrust Sir Arthur, who, he suspected, was probably trying to seize him unawares.

Irresolute, uncertain, wrought up by the sudden appearance of the Englishman, angry with him for denouncing a person whom he in his heart knew to be unworthy, but who had again inspired him with passion—his nervous system was so shocked as to render him incapable of understanding or judging clearly.

Sir Arthur saw my brother's eyes suddenly grow dim,

saw his face assume a leaden hue, saw his tall form totter, saw him raise his arms as if seeking for help, and the next moment Hermann lay in Sir Arthur's arms.

This was proof that he had exacted too much from the sick man; he saw his lips covered with a bloody moisture, and dragged him into the poverty-stricken room of the country-inn, in order to call assistance.

George hastened in and anxiously worked over him, bringing forth from a small chest all the medicines which, according to the doctor's instructions, he was accustomed to use and which generally overcame these attacks.

CHAPTER XXXII.

It was 11 o'clock in the morning when I received Sir Arthur's message to hasten to the village.

Without any suspicion of what had happened, filled with the most blissful expectations, I flew through the park.

At the end of it Sir Arthur met me. With great anxiety I sought to read his features, but they betrayed nothing which could give me cause for hope or fear. His face was very calm.

"Gracious countess," said he, "I was obliged to send for you, for our patient may need your help; in any case a deed must be hastened, which I can not delay, even though I may seem unfeeling."

"Our patient"—I looked at him interrogatively and anxiously.

"Is my brother in danger?" asked I, trembling.

"It would be difficult for me to tell," he answered

quietly. "He does not at any rate seem to be out of danger."

"You have spoken to him, Sir Wardley?"

"I have."

"You torture me, Sir Wardley! Be frank with me!"

"I am, countess."

Here he was suddenly interrupted. He stopped speaking and fastened his eyes on a side path which led into the street.

"Stephanie!" whispered I, and my hand trembled upon Sir Arthur's arm.

Indeed, she had just emerged from the forest, through which the path leading to the village ran; that explained to me the object of those walks, upon which I had watched her set out. Here in the thicket had she met my brother, and here had she awaited him, was perhaps even now expecting him.

Stephanie, dressed as usual in black silk, some dark, gauzy material over her luxuriant hair, was paler than I had ever seen her. She stood a moment motionless, staring at us. Suddenly she turned and disappeared in the woods.

Evidently the sight of Sir Arthur had startled her, and caused her to turn so hastily, for I observed that she had gazed at him in visible perplexity.

I knew nothing of any connection between Stephanie and this man; but I now understood why Sir Wardley had spoken of my brother placing his secret in unworthy hands, that night when I asked him what could have brought my brother to this neighborhood.

"Do you know that lady?" asked I, quickly, as Stephanie disappeared.

"I know her!" was his short answer, in a tone which sounded almost contemptuous.

I imagined that Sir Arthur probably had the same reason that his friend, Radom, had, for speaking of her in such a way.

"Is my brother prepared for my visit?" asked I, feeling that he did not wish to be questioned any further on the subject.

"No, gracious countess. I am afraid the talk we had together, which was unavoidable, was too exciting. His condition causes me much uneasiness. I must warn you that it may be necessary to avoid all conversation that could affect him in the same way, for I was obliged to ask more of him than I can answer for?"

Silently we passed through the village. Sir Arthur led me into a tolerably clean inn.

"Do not be uneasy," said he, at the door, half aloud, "at your brother's condition. I have already sent a messenger to the nearest town to telegraph for his doctor, who will understand him the best."

Sir Arthur conducted me into a narrow room, pointed to a door in the same, and asked me to wait until he called me.

"He is over there!—Caution!" whispered he. "I shall have the honor as soon as possible—"

With that he withdrew.

Immediately afterward I heard a voice saying in the next room:

"Gracious count, the Englishman is here and begs permission—"

If I were not greatly mistaken, that was George's voice, which, with its half-peasant dialect, I recognized.

So George was still with him; he had not forsaken his master, but had saved his life. How gladly would I have begged this fellow's pardon, for I had judged him falsely!

I now heard a languid voice—it was my brother's. How it made me tremble when I heard it for the first time!

“It would be better if he would leave me in peace. But I don't care! This is the last of me, I know! You see now, George, what a foolish thing you did, when you had me patched up by the doctor against my wishes. Had it not been for you I should have died then; you only, as it was, made me new trouble and compromised me with strangers. Do you know, George, I would like to speak with this Englishman once more—”

His voice grew weaker. There was a pause.

“Only think, George, this Englishman comes here and slanders my friend Langenbach, and then the Baroness von Ebersburg. What do you say to that?”

“Your excellency, we servants can always judge the intimate friends of our masters better than the masters themselves. Captain von Langenbach is a handsome and amiable gentleman, but I have always felt as if he thought more of himself than of you. I have never said anything against him, but when he left the castle and did not even express a desire to show you the last respect, I did not like it at all.”

“H'm, that was my wish!”

“Well, yes, you also told me that an hour after I had heard the shot I was to come and carry your body to the castle. But I acted according to my own heart and mind.”

“And the baroness, George? You may tell me all, if you happen to know anything about her. I may, perhaps, have time to see her once more. I should like to know if it be worth while.”

“I know nothing of her except that occasionally at the Residence it seemed to me as if she were very

intimate with the captain; but I may have been mistaken, excellency, and I would rather not say anything."

It was strange that my brother should converse so confidentially with his servant! He, who had always considered every one beneath him; who formerly would scarcely listen to his friends' suggestions; now that he was helpless and deserted, listened to the advice of this unprincipled fellow, who was at least honest in everything relating to his master.

"So you think, George, that I should accept the reconciliation that Baron von Radom offers me?" asked Hermann, after a long silence.

My heart beat so wildly at this question that it almost deafened me.

As yet I knew nothing of that which Sir Arthur and Hermann had spoken about; I now concluded that he had not only made communications concerning Stephanie and Langenbach, but that he had also undertaken the work of reconciliation.

And George was to advise him! This fellow must have obtained great power over his master by his devotion, and I trembled to think that such a common person as he, was called upon to decide so momentous a question.

"Gracious count," I heard George say, "I know nothing of what must take place when two noble gentlemen quarrel; of such a duel as this was, I never had any conception until I saw you lying on the grass weltering in your blood. But as your excellency, as I have heard—be not vexed with me!—insulted the baron, I think if he offers you his hand that you should accept it; such things must have an end, too."

I could have embraced the fellow! Breathless with

excitement I put my ear to the door. But for several minutes all was still.

"George, help me! Raise me!" I heard my brother say with difficulty.

"It would be better if the gracious count would be still. The Englishman has sent a messenger to town to telegraph for our physician, and your excellency should spare yourself until he arrives."

"Raise me, George! Those cursed pains are not so troublesome when I am in an upright position."

"If your excellency commands me; but it is not right."

Again a pause.

"Now ask the Englishman to enter. And one thing beforehand, George. I have just thought that it would be well to send my mother word at once that her son is still alive, if it is worth while, for—"

"At your pleasure, excellency."

I felt a pang in my heart. His mother! He did not yet know that she was awaiting him by her side in the dismal vault! And he only now thought of consoling her with the news of his existence. One single sign given her at the right time might have saved our poor mother's life, for she had only been killed by grief for her son; and to-day I had to listen to a servant advising his master. Still, I could understand my brother's behavior.

His pain, his isolation, his present life, had robbed him of the one thing which he had known how to value or over-value in life; his own word, his own superiority in everything. He was passing a life *outré-tombe* which filled him with bitterness, with scorn and mockery of all things, even with envy of the worm at his feet.

A noise interrupted my thoughts. The front door

slowly opened and shut. I heard steps in the next room, but for some seconds no sound of human voices.

Then I heard my brother's.

"Sir baron, you yourself come to admonish me!" cried he, with an effort. "My servant foolishly disobeyed my orders, but you may take my word for it, there will only be a short reprieve, which is scarcely worth a bullet. I have fulfilled my duty, though somewhat clumsily; however, as things are, it can not matter to you if I draw a few breaths more or less."

"Sir count," I heard the same voice say that had always stirred my soul, but which now exercised such a blissfully surprising effect upon me, that I was obliged to lean against some object, so as to stand upright. "Sir count, receive the assurance that no moment of my life was more appreciated than that in which I received the news from my friend across the sea, that God's own hand had mercifully prevented an act which in our passionate blindness and precipitation we were answerable for. Now I stand before you, and offer you the hand of friendship! Nothing according to the laws of honor accords you the right to refuse it; however, I only desire yours of your own free will, and hope that you will forgive and forget what has taken place between us."

Again there was a pause. I held my breath. Everything depended upon Hermann's answer. All the joy which had been awakened in me, crept back fearfully and tremblingly at the possibility of Hermann's rude, imperious will again over-mastering him. Could I only have seen him—no doubt he was just the same as when he had tried to rule me, although he was ill.

"Sir Baron von Radom," began he finally, in a low voice, "I am grateful to you for your sentiments. You know the cause of our falling out; as long as that exists,

I shall be obliged to look upon it as the motive for your present manner of acting." A coughing spell interrupted his speech. "If I saw fit to accept your hand, you would have to give me your word of honor beforehand that you renounce all claims to my sister, for it would be silly and inconsistent in me, and a sign of defeat, were I to grant, after our *rencontre*, what before was the cause of our enmity. With your hand I must therefore receive the assurance that no selfish aim actuates you to this honorable step!"

"That assurance, sir count, I give you, for I was prepared for it."

Radom's words sounded forced, as if wrung from his heart, a heart capable of such noble self-sacrifice. With them my hopes were dashed to the ground. His words sounded to me like my death-knell.

"I also, sir count, add one condition, if it is only our purpose to conclude a treaty of peace," continued Radom. "My condition is that the hand of the Countess von M. shall not be given to a man whose unworthiness I am fully convinced of. I was not acting for myself, but rather for the freedom and happiness of a lady, whom to renounce, although it cost me much, fate demanded when we became sworn enemies. I was fighting less for myself than for her."

"We are agreed, sir baron." Hermann's voice grew fainter and fainter. "There is only one thing more for me to do, and that is to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the way in which you have acted, although I shall not gain much benefit from it, for the life which I prolonged is scarcely worth anything—

"George, help me!" I heard him call out loudly. "Thank you, George," continued he, still coughing. "I do not believe I shall await the doctor's arrival. My

way is further than his is, and though I may have some time before I enter upon it, I must prepare for it."

Hermann's words, which were uttered in a weak voice and with increasing effort, made me anxious. I wanted to go out, to go to him, but I feared an outbreak of his displeasure.

"Help me to that chair again, George," he continued, almost breathlessly. "It is lighter there. All is so dark to me. That is well. Now leave us; I have more to say to the gentlemen here."

Again there was a pause, during which my anxiety increased.

"Sir Wardley," again began Hermann, raising his voice, which was growing weaker, with difficulty. "You were once the witness and attorney of Baron von Radom; I must make use of you in the same capacity. If I were better, I should have this gentleman to thank for my life. It is not his fault that I am in this condition, not his fault that I am no better; I therefore am in his debt. Be kind enough to take a pen, a pencil, or whatever is at hand, and write the following—"

Hermann stopped. His voice was low, and he evidently was gathering up all his strength.

"I am ready, sir count," I heard Sir Arthur say.

"I thank you! Now write. They are a few lines for my mother, which my hand is not able to write. Write this: At the hour of my death—"

A cry of anguish escaped my lips. Hermann might have heard me. He stopped. Then I heard him continue.

"At the hour of my death, which I believe has arrived, I pray my mother, Countess von M., whom I can not bid farewell in person, by virtue of the authority given me by my father, to give my sister Paula, to whom I leave

my last greeting, within a year from to-day, in marriage to Baron von Radom, a nobleman to press whose hand in my last hour of life I consider the most sacred and last duty of my utterly-ruined life."

I heard no more. My thoughts grew confused. I knew not what I did. Pressing the rusty lock of the door, I pushed it open, and the next second I lay at my brother's feet.

"Hermann!" cried I. I clung to his knees; I looked up at him, but my eyes were dimmed with tears. I could not see him; I only heard his voice say:

"Paula, you!" then a cold hand grasped mine and held it tightly.

I felt a violent convulsion of his hand, of his limbs. Firmer, colder, and icier his hand pressed mine.

When the tears flowed from my eyes over my cheeks, I could see clearer. I saw one of my brother's hands clasping mine. I saw Radom kneeling beside me, his hand in my brother's.

With an exclamation I tried to rise, for Hermann's head had sunk against the back of the chair, and his eyes were fixed.

"My brother—dead!" I cried out, looking into his eyes; then I sank into the arms of him who was kneeling next me.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

For the third time was our vault opened, this time to receive the dear one whom our beloved mother had awaited.

It was Sir Arthur who attended to my unfortunate brother's funeral. He was a great help to me, for "good

form" and respect for the world's opinion forbade Radom taking any part in those sad arrangements.

"I have nothing else to do," said Sir Arthur to me, as I told him not to work too hard. "For Otto's sake I bade farewell to my whole career; indeed I had fully made up my mind to set up a wigwam with him somewhere on the Indian frontier—now I have nothing at all in view, and if you will allow me, countess, I shall try to make myself useful, and apply my technical talent to completing the building of the castle, which has so long stood unfinished. That will give me employment for years, and through that, I shall have a pretext for remaining near my friend and his charming—wife."

Hermann's body was laid in the vault with great state. Sir Arthur had wished it so. At his desire, Radom was present.

The king sent two of his adjutants; of Hermann's friends several came from the Residence, but not Langenbach, who had sense enough to remain away; our castle was filled with guests.

Confused as I had been by all the exciting incidents, I recovered more rapidly than I had anticipated. I now discovered, if such a thing were possible, how doubly dear the man was to me, whom I had mourned as lost; and Sir Arthur's merry temperament, as far as it could at such a sad time, exercised a beneficial effect upon me. Upon Radom, his last experiences had had a deep and lasting effect.

He had not been able to love my brother, neither had he hated him; Hermann's conduct on his death-bed had convinced him that he, who in his lifetime was always amenable to trivial influences, at the last moment, when he had left them behind, was capable of a greatness of

soul, to exhibit which to the world's praise and flattery, he had not considered it worth his while.

Only in those last moments had I been able to see any similarity to my father.

He was of the same material, but had been spoilt by the influences brought to bear upon him; indeed, the sphere in which he moved was not favorable to any process of refining, which alone could develop in him what was noble and great.

My brother's last action made me forget all that I had suffered through him. A petty soul could not have acted so, and all the affection that he had been lacking in from childhood, I thought to have found in that one pressure which he gave my hand before his eyes closed forever.

When the sad ceremonies led us from the chapel to the vault, Otto knelt beside me by the coffin covered with flowers.

The departed had given him the right to do so, in fact, had imposed the duty upon him, for Hermann had in his last moments clasped his hand in brotherly love and blessed our union.

Tears were in Otto's eyes as we rose.

When I once more knelt beside my parents' graves and offered up a fervent prayer to heaven for the dear ones who were united, my eyes fell upon a darkly clad figure standing at the head of Hermann's coffin.

I started. An exclamation of surprise escaped me. I had recognized Eugenie.

Collecting myself, I followed Sir Arthur.

We left the vault and I withdrew to the rooms prepared for me in the castle, which I was to occupy several days, in company with Gertrude and my maid, until I had decided upon my next move.

In the mood which had led me here I was cut off from the entire outer world. Lost in meditation, only comforted by the thought that God had given back to me him who was all my future, I sat there for hours, until suddenly the recollection of that dark figure in the vault aroused me.

"Eugenie!—Gertrude, I saw Eugenie to-day! She is here!" cried I.

"She was indeed here, countess. I only caught a glimpse of her," was the answer.

"She must be sought for! She must not get away! I wish to see her!"

This command seemed to Gertrude unwelcome. She hesitated.

"Hurry, Gertrude! It was she who nursed my brother so devotedly!"

Gertrude's astonishment increased visibly. She had never concealed her disapproval of Eugenie's conduct.

"Call George! He must know something about her!" Gertrude was more inclined to go after what I told her. She hastened out and returned with George, who had, at his own wish, entered Sir Arthur's service, until I could occupy the castle and give him a position for which he was fitted.

George, who truly mourned his lost master, entered, clad in black, with sorrow and respect in his face and manner.

He said that "Mademoiselle Eugenie," as she was still called at the castle, had that morning come over from the neighboring village where, since the count had died, she had found shelter, and where she had been kindly received, for her husband had confessed that he had stolen the fifty guldens, on account of which poor Eugenie had been so persecuted.

She had also been in the chapel, where, hidden in a corner, she had wept bitterly for the deceased count, for whom she would gladly have given her life, although he, during his terrible sufferings, had been very unkind to her.

He had seen her leave the vault after the ceremony, but had not seen her again, for she always avoided notice.

"She must be sought for and messengers must be sent to the village! I must speak with her!" I whispered to George, who went to carry out my orders. Soon after I saw a messenger return to the castle.

Gertrude reported to me that Eugenie was not to be found. And from the village came word that she had not returned. Some days later I received a letter, with the Residence postmark upon it. It was addressed in Eugenie's hand.

Eugenie wrote to me in French that she was grateful to me for all the care I had devoted to her child. She was just about to call for her and return to France.

"Do not seek for poor Eugenie," was the way in which she concluded. "The grave and I guard a secret, and as I can not divulge it, I must go far away."

I understood what she implied, for they had again begun to try to fathom the Richtmann case in the village.

All efforts were in vain. I was certain that Eugenie had taken quite a different route from that which she said she had, and indeed no trace of her could be found.

* * * * *

In the autumn of the following year, my husband and I were to leave Ostende and go to the Pyrenees, where we were to meet Sir Arthur.

The day before our departure we received a letter from him from Brighthelm, in which he informed us that he would await us at home; he preferred returning to his castle, which required his presence.

Hunting also called him there, and yet another reason; he wished to consider if he should propose to a pretty compatriot whom he had learned to love at Brighthelm; this matter must be carefully weighed before he plunged into such a dangerous situation.

Half an hour before we left, Marquis de Chevreux entered. He had recently recovered from an attack of nervous prostration and was here for the benefit of his health, and who, although not entirely "disinfected from perfume," as Radom expressed it, had been our daily and pleasant companion.

We saw by his face that he had some news to impart.

"Guess whom I have just met!" he began, in a strangely agitated manner.

"We have not the time to guess conundrums, dear Chevreux," replied my husband, looking at his watch. "The meeting must have been to you, at least, a very interesting one."

"An old acquaintance! Moreover, I have found her name in the visitor's list which was just handed to me. Monsieur le Comte Bertoux," read Chevreux, opening the list.

"Bertoux—I remember having met him at the club in Paris," said Radom, without interrupting his hasty preparations for our journey.

"Well, what besides?"

"Madame la Comtesse Bertoux, née Baroness Stephanie d'Ebersburg de Paris," read Chevreux, and looked at us to see the effect.

"I congratulate them," said Radom, indifferently. "It

is an old love, I presume, for I believe that I saw that Bertoux with her once in Paris."

"You do not know that Baroness von Ebersburg inherited an immense fortune, indeed shortly after her disappearance from the Residence, from whence the poor creature was driven by the *médiance* of those who envied her?" said Chevreux, who was delighted to have again met her. "They are on their wedding-tour."

"God preserve them to you a long time!" With that Radom pressed our old friend's hand before departing. When we, at some distance from the hotel, waved our last farewell, he returned it by flourishing his handkerchief in the air.

At the sight of that handkerchief, which we had not seen for so long a time, we both felt as if the sea-air were suddenly impregnated with perfume from Sharon's gardens, to which perfume he had returned, in spite of the physician's warnings, since his nerves had in some degree been strengthened by the sea-baths.

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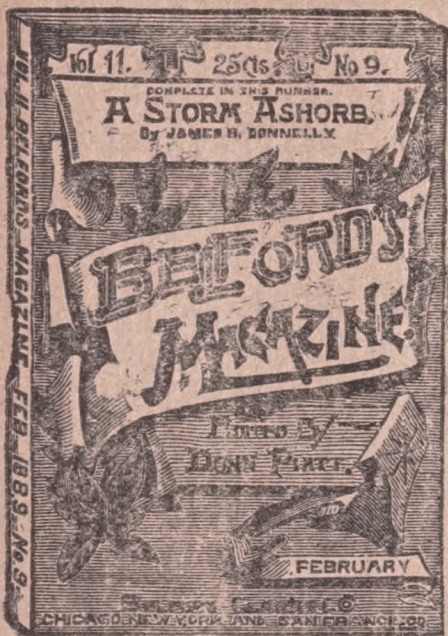
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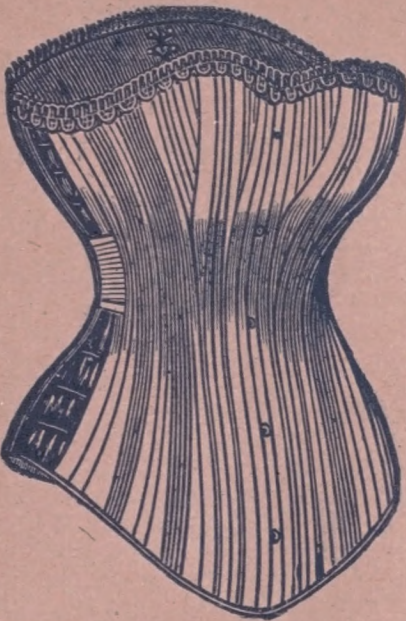
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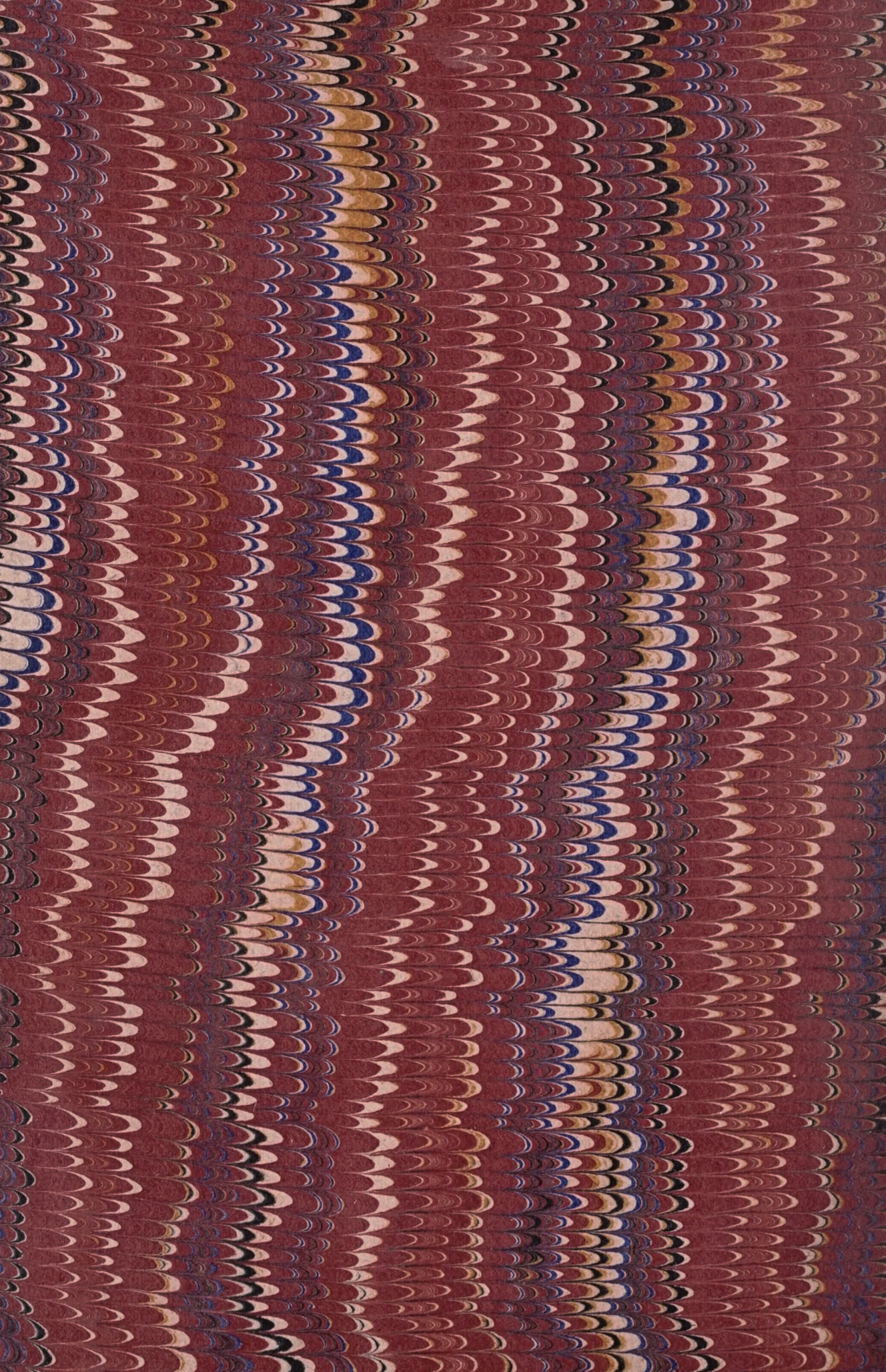
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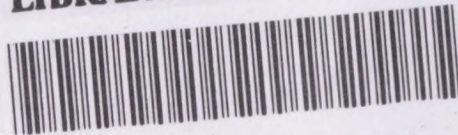
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